

**LECTURES**  
**ON THE**  
**CATECHISM**  
**OF THE**  
**CHURCH OF ENGLAND.**

LECTURES

ON THE

CATHOLICISM

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND



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ON THE  
CATECHISM  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

*England, Ch. of  
Catechism*

By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.  
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VOL. I.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR R. BLAMIRE IN THE STRAND; SOLD  
BY R. FAULDER, NEW BOND-STREET, AND  
B. LAW, AVE MARY-LANE.

MDCCCLXXIX.

LETTERS

FROM

TO



TO THE  
YOUNG GENTLEMEN,  
WHO HAVE BEEN EDUCATED AT  
CHEAM SCHOOL.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following Lectures upon  
the Catechism of the Church  
of England, have little pretence to  
expect attention from the genera-  
lity of readers, who are furnished  
with many better helps. But as  
they were composed for your use;  
and as several of you, at different  
times, have desired copies of them;  
they may, aided by your partiality,  
perhaps meet with a more favou-  
rable

rable reception among you. They accost you with the familiarity of an old acquaintance ; and hope to get admittance, and whisper a few serious truths, when wiser instructors are neglected.

I have endeavoured, in some degree, to give them a better form, than that plain one, in which you knew them. I have abridged them : also, as I would not trespass too much upon your hours of leisure or business ; and should be sorry to fatigue your patience as a friend, though I have been sometimes, perhaps, obliged to do it as a master.

On the evidences of our religion,  
and the great doctrines of Christi-  
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anity, it hath been my chief endeavour to engage your attention. If the mind be deeply impressed with these leading truths, it requires only a slighter lesson on morals. Faith, we know, was the great point in preaching the gospel; and he who seriously believes it, cannot well fail of being a good Christian.

I have endeavoured, in the course of these Lectures, to shew you, that scarce any of the great truths of the gospel were so wholly new, but that some notices of them, or at least resemblances, may be traced even among the heathen nations—among those, which were more polished especially; and perhaps  
among



among all, if we were more intimately acquainted with them : and as this shews either a great harmony between reason and revelation ; or, that these preparatory notices originated immediately from the Deity ; it always appeared to me an argument, that carried great conviction. If we even suppose, these notices to have been wholly of Jewish origin, still the unforced adoption of them, shews strongly their agreement with reason ; and therefore opposes strongly the endeavours of those, who labour to set reason and revelation at variance.

In this light, a late very ingenious, and distinguished writer, seems

to build a part of his theory upon false ground ; when he tells us, that from the New Testament *may be extracted a system of religion, entirely new, both with regard to the object, and the doctrines of it ; and totally unlike every thing, which had ever before entered into the mind of man.* \*

In pressing moral rules, I have sometimes rather chosen a quotation from Horace, than a text from scripture. In one sense, he is better authority than an apostle. If his unlightened mind had such just and noble sentiments, what may be expected from a Christian ?

\* See Mr. Jenyns's Inter. Evid. p. 17.

It was some inducement to me, Gentlemen, in publishing these papers, to leave in your memory a testimony of that earnestness, with which I always wished to press upon you the great truths of religion, and virtue. These, without any disparagement to human literature, ought certainly to be the first objects of education. Where one miscarries for want of learning, numbers miscarry for want of principles.

I have, with great satisfaction, seen many of you, as you came forward in life, filling your several stations, with propriety and credit: and it is one of the greatest pleasures of my retirement, to think,

think, I shall daily see many more. A few mortifications too I have had. But there is some ground, at least, to hope, that where good principles have been early inculcated, they may, sooner or later, revive: and should these lectures contribute, in any degree, to that purpose, they will have answered one of my principal ends.

That these, or any other means, may enable you to see your real, and most important interests in life, and to pursue them steadily, is, with great affection, and earnestness, the constant wish of

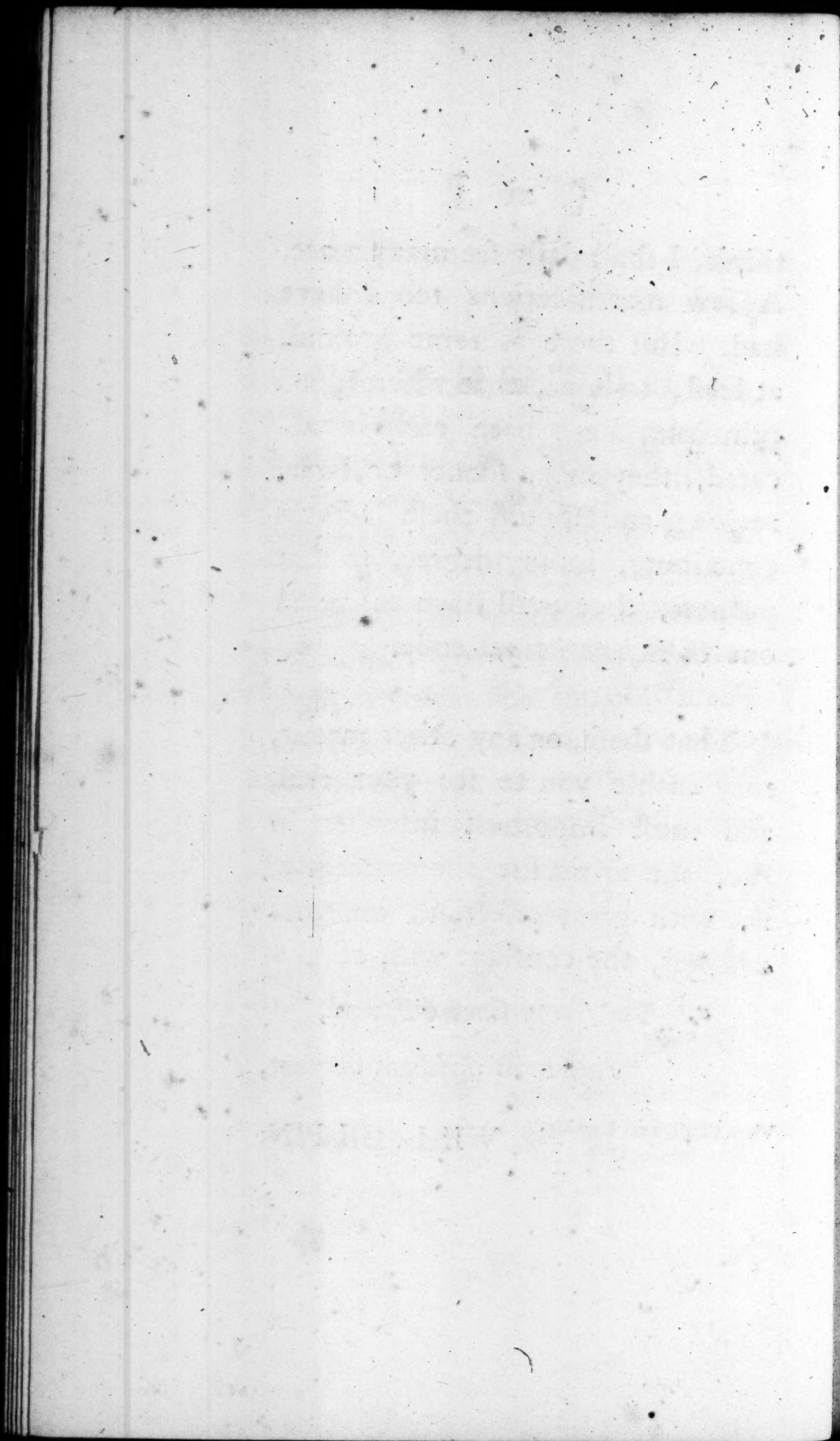
Your very sincere Friend,

And most obedient Servant,

Vicar's Hill, near Lymington,  
Jan. 6, 1779.

WILL. GILPIN.







## LECTURE I.

History of the catechism—general contents of it—baptismal vow—use of sponsors—name given in baptism—substance of the vow—renunciation of sin—faith—obedience—connection between them—St. Paul's Doctrine with regard to faith, explained—promises made, on God's part, upon our keeping the vow—divine assistance necessary.

B

IT



**I**T was among the earliest cares of the first promoters of the reformation, to provide a catechism for the instruction of youth. But the same caution, with regard to the prejudices of men, was necessarily to be used in this matter, as had been used in all the other religious transactions of those times. At first, it was thought sufficient to begin with such common things, as were acknowledged both by papists and protestants. The first catechism therefore consisted simply of the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer: and it was no easy matter to bring even these into general use. They were received by the people, in the midst of that profound ignorance, which then reigned, as a species of incantation; and it was long before the grossness

ness of vulgar conception was even enlightened enough to apprehend, that the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer, meant simply to direct their faith, their practice, and their devotion.

This was all the progress, that was made in catechetical instruction from the beginning of the reformation, till so late a period as the year 1549. About that time a farther attempt was made by archbishop Cranmer, as it is commonly supposed. He ventured to add a few cautious explanatory passages; which was all the prejudices of men would yet bear. The great prudence indeed, of that wise and good man, appeared in nothing more, than in the easy movements, with which he introduced every change.

In



In the year 1553, a farther attempt was hazarded. A catechism was published by authority, in which not only the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer were more fully expounded; but a brief explanation also of the sacraments was added. This bold work, however, was not ventured in the english tongue; but was published in latin, for the use of schools. Archbishop Wake,\* whose authority I chiefly follow, supposes this catechism to be the first model of that, which is now in use.

Thus the matter rested, till the reign of Elizabeth. In the mean time, the violent measures of her predecessor, had tended greatly to open an inquisitive temper in the age; and to abolish its

\* See the dedication to his commentary on the church catechism.



prejudices. Men began to have some notion of thinking for themselves; and it was no longer necessary to observe that extreme caution, which had hitherto been observed, in addressing them on religious subjects. The catechism therefore was now improved on a more liberal plan; and having undergone several reviews, was at length published by authority, nearly in its present form, in the year 1563. It ought to be mentioned, that the person principally concerned in this work, was Nowel, dean of St. Paul's.

From this short history of the catechism, the various forms it underwent, and the care and caution employed in composing it, we need not wonder at finding it, what it really appears to be, a very accurate, judicious, and comprehensive

hensive summary of the principles, and doctrines of the christian religion.

It begins with a recital of our baptismal vow, as a kind of preface to the whole. It then lays down the great christian principle of faith; and leaving all mysterious inquiries, in which this subject is involved, it passes on to the rules of practice. Having briefly recited these, it concludes with a simple, and very intelligible explanation of baptism, and the Lord's supper.

The catechism then begins very properly, with a recital of our baptismal vow, as the best preface to that belief, and those rules of practice, in which that vow engaged us.—But before we examine the vow itself, two appendages of it require explanation—the use of sponsors—and the addition of a name.

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With regard to the sponsor, the church probably imitates the appointment of the legal guardian, making the best provision it can, for the pious education of orphans, and deserted children. The temporal and the spiritual guardian may equally betray their trust: both are culpable: both accountable: but surely the latter breaks the more sacred engagement.

As to promising and vowing in the name of another, (which seems to carry so harsh a sound) the sponsor only engages for the child, as any one would engage for another, in a matter, which is manifestly for his advantage: and on a supposition, that the child hereafter will see it to be so—that is, he promises, as he takes it for granted, the child itself would have promised, if it had been able.

With

With regard to the name, it is no part of the sacrament; nor pretends to scriptural authority. It rests merely on ancient usage. A custom had generally obtained, of giving a new name, upon adopting a new member into a family. We find it common among the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews: nay, we read that even God himself, when he received Abraham into covenant, giving an early sanction to this usage, changed his name to Abraham. In imitation of this common practice, the old christians gave baptismal names to their children, which were intended to point out their heavenly adoption, as their surnames distinguished their temporal alliance.

From considering the use of sponsors, and of the name, in baptism, we proceed next to the vow itself, which is thus expressed.



expressed. “ My godfathers did promise three things in my name: 1st,  
 “ That I should renounce the devil,  
 “ and all his works, the pomps and  
 “ vanities of this wicked world, and all  
 “ the sinful lusts of the flesh. 2dly,  
 “ That I should believe all the articles  
 “ of the christian faith; and 3dly, That  
 “ I should keep God’s holy will, and  
 “ commandments, and walk in the same  
 “ all the days of my life.”

First then, we promise to “ renounce  
 “ the devil, and all his works, the  
 “ pomps and vanities of this wicked  
 “ world, and all the sinful lusts of the  
 “ flesh.” “ The devil, the world, and the  
 flesh,” is a comprehensive mode of expressing every species of sin, however distinguished; and from whatever source derived: all which we not only engage

gage to renounce as far as we are able; but also to take pains in tracing the labyrinths of our own hearts; and in removing the glosses of self-deceit. Without this, all renunciation of sin is pretence.

Being thus enjoined to renounce our gross, habitual sins, and those bad inclinations, which lead us into them; we are required next to “believe all the articles of the christian faith.” This is a natural progression. When we are thoroughly convinced of the malignity of sin, we in course wish to avoid the ill consequences of it; and are prepared to give a fair hearing to the evidence of religion. There is a close connection between vice, and infidelity. They mutually support each other. The same connection subsists between a well disposed mind, and the truths of religion:  
and

and faith perhaps is not so involuntary an act, as many of our modern philosophers would persuade us.

After "believing the articles of the christian faith," we are lastly enjoined to "keep God's holy will and commandments." Here too is the same natural progression. As the renunciation of sin prepares the way for faith, so does faith lead directly to obedience. They seem related to each other, as the mean and the end. "The end of the commandment," saith the apostle, "is charity, out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned." Faith, (which is the act of believing upon rational evidence,) is the great fountain, from which all christian virtues spring. No man will obey a law, till he hath informed himself whether it be properly authorized: or, in other words,

words, till he believe in the jurisdiction that enacted it.—If our faith in Christ doth not lead us to obey him; it is what the scriptures call a dead faith, in opposition to a saving one.

To this inseparable connection between faith and obedience, St. Paul's doctrine may be objected, where he seems to lay the whole stress on faith, in opposition to works\*.—But it is plain, that St. Paul's argument requires him to mean by faith, the whole system of the christian religion, (which is indeed the meaning of the word in many other parts of scripture;) and by works, which he sets in opposition to it, the moral law. So that, in fact, the apostle's argument relates not to the present question; but tends only to establish the superiority of christianity. The

\* See Rom. iii. 28. and indeed great part of the epistle.



moral law, argues the apostle, which claimed on the righteousness of works, makes no provision for the deficiencies of man. Christianity alone, by opening a door of mercy, gave him hopes of that salvation, which the other could not pretend to give.

Upon renouncing sin, believing the articles of the christian faith, and keeping God's holy commandments, as far as sinful man can keep them, we are intitled by promise to all the privileges of the gospel. We "become members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." We are redeemed through the merits of Christ; pardoned through the mercies of God; and rewarded with a blessed immortality.

This account of our baptismal vow concludes with a question, leading us to  
acknowledge

acknowledge the necessity of observing this vow ; and to declare our belief, that our only hope of keeping it rests upon the assistance of God.

Having considered our baptismal vow, or the prefatorial part, we come now to the body itself of the catechism ; which naturally divides into the two great branches of the vow, faith, and obedience—the first as contained in the creed ; the second in the commandments.

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## LECTURE II.

History of creeds—three creeds established in our church—the apostles creed—analysis of it—authenticity of scripture proved—from a chain of the earliest writers, mentioning, and quoting them—from the enemies of christianity acknowledging their existence—from the rejection of forged gospels and epistles—from their various translations—from reading them in public assemblies—from their internal evidence—argument against their adulteration, from the jealousies of different sects—objections answered,

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WHEN the purity of the christian religion became mingled with human inventions; and sectaries, instead of judging from the whole tenor of the gospel, built their narrow systems upon detached parts—then it was that different churches thought it necessary to frame creeds, with an intention to distinguish articles of faith from matters of opinion: and the primary idea of a creed was merely to bring these articles together, from various parts of scripture, into one point of view.

But as corruption advanced, and different churches began to found different systems on the same articles; then each church thought it necessary to proceed a step further; and to inlarge its creed by explanations; with a view to shew, in what sense it received each article;

or, in other words, to draw a line between itself, and such churches, as it thought held unscriptural tenets.—Hence, we may easily suppose, that many of these creeds were as absurd, as the various opinions, which gave them birth: and hence the creeds, even of the purest churches, became clogged with explanatory clauses; which if they had their use in some cases, produced mischief in others.—This is the short history of creeds.

In our church, three of these ancient creeds are retained—that authenticated by the council of Nice—the Athenasian—and that which is commonly, tho improperly, called the Apostles-creed. As to the Athenasian creed, it has given great offence to many well-meaning persons, by the damnatory clauses with which it is guarded; though, in fact, these

these make no part of the creed itself; but rest solely with the author of it. The apostles creed, however, is chargeable with nothing of this kind: it hath stood the test of ages; and (unless in one or two obscure passages) hath been ever thought unexceptionable.

This creed was composed before any of the subtilties of the doctrine of the trinity were introduced; which tend more to create animosity amongst men, than to amend their hearts. In it we simply declare our belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy-ghost—in the scripture account of the life, and sufferings of Christ—in the redemption of the world from sin—in the resurrection of the dead—and in the eternity of a future state.

But before we enter upon the examination of these points, as we shall have frequent

frequent occasion, in the course of it, to appeal to the New Testament, it seems natural, first to prove the authenticity of the several books of which it is composed. I shall just therefore touch the heads of argument, made use of in this proof.

A series of christian writers, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement, Origen, \* and others, who lived in the ages succeeding those of the apostles, and whose writings are still extant, agree in declaring those books, which compose the canon of scripture, as now settled,

*\* The reader will find these proofs at large, in Whitby's general introduction to the gospels and epistles; and in Jenkins's reasonab. of christianity, vol. ii. c. 4. He will find likewise proofs in favour of St. Matthew's gospel, the epistles to the Hebrews, and some other parts of scripture, which were not at first so universally received.*

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to have descended regularly from the apostolic times.

The very originals indeed of some of them appear to have been preserved, till the third century ; for Tertullian, who dyed at the close of the second, seems to appeal to them, as then existing \*.

In those early ages the authenticity of scripture was universally acknowledged, both by friends and enemies. Celsus, Julian, and all the eminent anti-christians of those days, no more disputed the authenticity of scripture, than we do that of the koran. Their objections to the one, and our objections to the

\* *Percurre ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ authenticæ literæ eorum recitantur, sonantes vocem, & representantes faciem uniuscujusq.*

*De Præscrip. c. 36.*

other

other, run in a different channel. On this head no disputes were ever heard of; nor any interruption in the regular chain of evidence.

When indeed could a forgery have been introduced? In whatever age we suppose it to have been attempted, we cannot imagine the christians of that age would have been supine in examining a matter of such consequence: and as the scriptures still hold their credit, we may fairly conclude, that either no such attempt was ever made; or that, if it was made, it was wholly inefficacious.

Besides, many gospels and epistles appeared in different ages of the church; and tho some of them had a very evangelical cast, and were writings of intrinsic value, yet they were rejected by all christians,

christians, only because they could not produce proofs of their authenticity.

But besides these common marks of authenticity, the scripture hath others peculiar to itself. It was translated into all languages: it was every where dispersed: it was carefully preserved in churches, and other public places: it was read not only in private; but universally in the assemblies of the people: its friends had the highest veneration for it, as it contained the charter of all their hopes; and its enemies held it in the utmost aversion, as it combated all their worldly schemes, and pretensions. Nay to such a degree of rancour were its adversaries animated, that they often endeavoured to destroy it utterly; which it is not probable they would have attempted, if they could have shewn it to have been spurious:

rious: this would certainly have been a more liberal, as well as a more effectual mode of rejection.

To the external evidence, in proof of the authenticity of scripture, may be added no little degree of strength from its internal evidence. The simplicity of the writers, and of the writings correspond. There is the same agreement between the several parts of each book, and the general scheme of christianity.

An appeal also is often made to extraordinary gifts, which, in those early times, were exercised in the church: and surely no impostor would have been forward in making such an appeal, if no such gifts had been known.

Different persons likewise, who were then alive, are mentioned; which afforded

ed a very unnecessary hint for a detection, if no such persons had existed.

In many of St. Paul's epistles also a variety of rites, and customs are alluded to, as then in use, which in the next age, after the destruction of Jerusalem, are known to have been totally abolished.

But tho the scripture could not be forged, might it not have been adulterated ?

This seems impossible from the variety of sects, which sprang up in the earliest times of christianity. As these, in general, persecuted each other, they would undoubtedly have joined in clamour against any one sect, which had ventured to receive a portion of scripture



ture as genuine, which was not universally acknowledged.

Objections, though of no great force, have been made to scripture, from the disagreement found among the ancient copies of the New Testament.

But this disagreement consists, in general, of mere grammatical niceties. In one copy, a particle is added, which is omitted in another. Of this sort are the greater part of the various readings of the New Testament: and it could not well be otherwise. Inaccuracies of this kind are unavoidable; and may indeed argue inattention in the transcriber; but are surely no argument against the authenticity of the book.

The objector argues with more weight, when he alledges, what he calls,  
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the contradictions of scripture. One of the sacred writers tells us, that our Saviour ordered his disciples, when they preached, to take staves : another, that he ordered them to take none. This affirms, that at the resurrection two angels were seen ; that mentions only one. And he who will be at the pains of comparing attentively all the evangelical accounts, must be obliged to acknowledge, they are far from being perfectly harmonious.—Now, where we find such manifest contradictions, what are we to say ? Is there any dependence upon books, in which they are found ?

In answer to this objection, it might perhaps be no difficult matter to shew, that these contradictions do not really exist ; and that the passages, which are imagined to contain them, may be reconciled. But giving the objection its  
force,

force, it has no tendency to overthrow the veracity of the sacred writings : it rather indeed concludes in favour of them ; inasmuch as it shews, there was no collusion among the writers. Such little variations affect neither the doctrine, nor the history. The doctrine is clearly consistent throughout ; and the history is evidently, in all its material circumstances, the same.

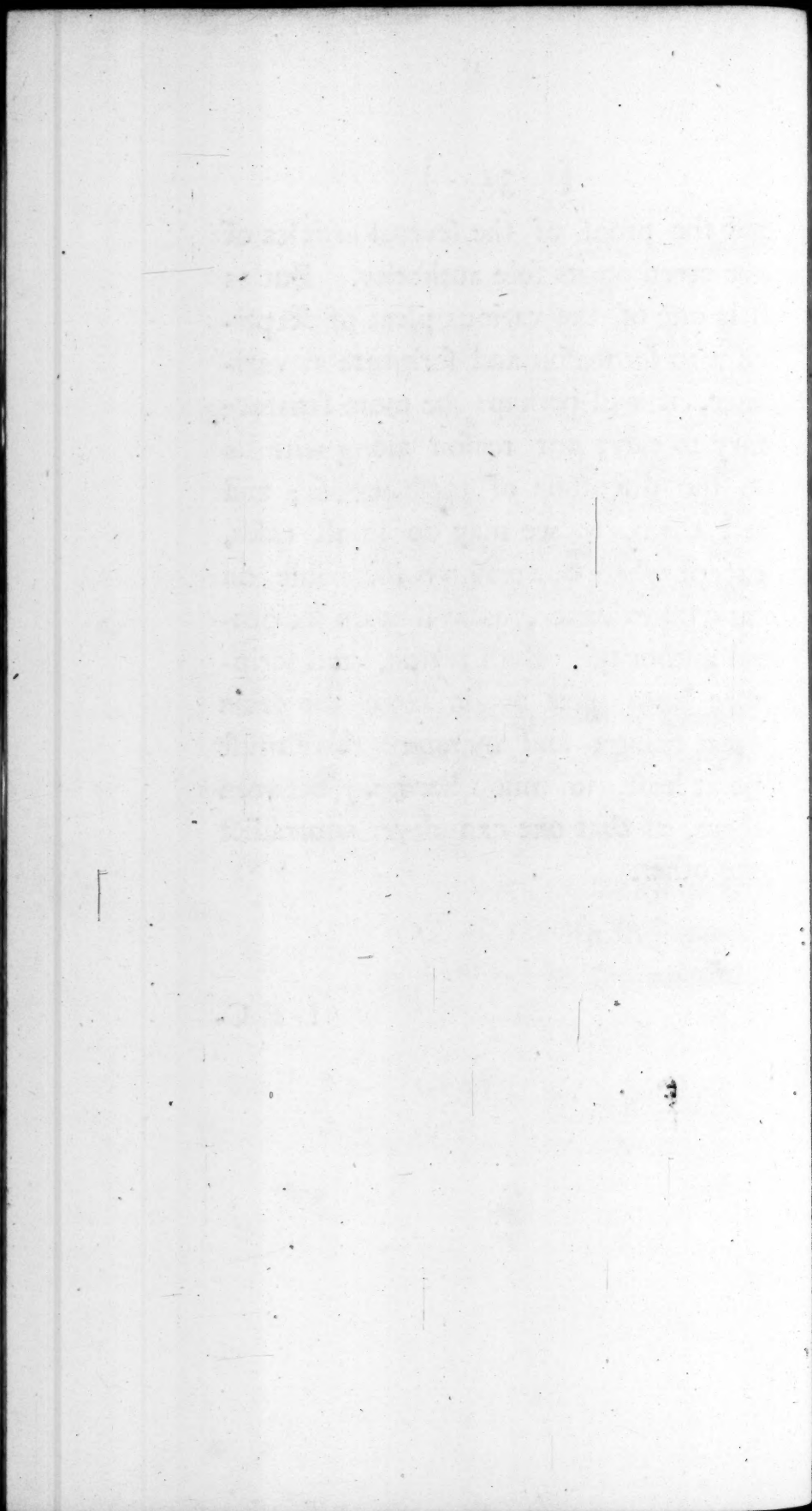
But where is your inspiration then ? If the spirit of God directs, it will direct even the minutest truth.

If it only preserve from error in matters of importance, it is surely sufficient. To suppose more, would be to conceive very grossly of inspiration.

Having thus endeavoured to establish the authenticity of scripture, we might  
rest

rest the proof of the several articles of our creed on its sole authority. But as it is one of the various pleas of scepticism to set reason and scripture at variance, it will perhaps be more satisfactory to carry our reason along with us in the discussion of these proofs; and rest them, as we may do in all cases, except where our reason is incapable, on rational evidence, as well as on scriptural authority. Both reason, and scripture have their origin from the same great being; and therefore there must be at least, so much harmony between them, as that one can never contradict the other.

L E C.





## LECTURE III.

Being of a God proved—from the creation of the world, implying design in the whole, and all its parts—from the uniformity observed in the preservation of it—from the universal consent of mankind, whether we suppose it founded on tradition; or consider it as the result of men's own reasoning—atheistical objections from individuals professing atheism—from the apparent injustice of God's government—these objections answered—for just notions of the deity, recourse must be had to scripture,

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THE creed begins with a profession of our belief in "God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

The being of a God is one of those truths, which scarce require proof. A proof seems rather an injury, as it supposes doubt. However, as young minds, though not sceptical, are uninformed, it may not be improper to select out of the variety of arguments, which evince this great truth, two or three of the most simple,

The existence of a deity, we prove from the light of nature. For his attributes, at least in any perfection, we must look into scripture.

A few plain and simple arguments drawn from the creation of the world—the preservation of it—and the general consent of mankind, strike us with more conviction, than all the subtilties of metaphysical deduction.

We prove the being of a God first from the creation of the world.

The world must have been produced either by design, or by chance. No other mode of origin can be supposed. Let us see then with which of these characters it is impressed.

The characteristic of the works of design, is a relation of parts, in order to produce an end.—The characteristic of the works of chance is just the reverse.—When we see stones, answering each other, laid in the form of a regular building, we immediately

immediately say, they were put together by design: but when we see them thrown about in a disorderly heap, we say as confidently, they have been thrown so by chance.

Now, in the world, and all its appendages, there is plainly this appearance of design. One part relates to another; and the whole together produces an end. The sun, for instance, is connected with the earth, by warming it into a proper heat, for the production of its fruits; and furnishing it with rain and dew. The earth again is connected with all the vegetables, which it produces, by providing them with proper soils, and juices for their nourishment. These again are connected with animals, by supplying them with food. And the whole together produces the  
great



great end of sustaining the lives of innumerable creatures.

Nor is design shewn only in the grand fabric of the world, and all its relative appendages; it is equally shewn in every part. It is seen in every animal, adapted in all its peculiarities to its proper mode of life. It is seen in every vegetable, furnished with parts exactly suited to its situation. In the least, as well as in the greatest of nature's productions, it is every where apparent. The little creeper upon the wall, extending its tenacious fibres, draws nourishment from the crannies of the stones; and flourishes where no other plant could live.

If then the world, and every part of it, are thus marked with the characters of design, there can be no difficulty in acknowledging the author of such design  
of

—of such amazing contrivance, and variety, to be a being of infinite wisdom and power. We call a man ingenious, who makes even a common globe, with all the parts of the earth delineated upon it. What shall we say then of the author of the great original itself, in all its grandeur, and furnished with all its various inhabitants?

The argument drawn from the preservation of the world, is indeed rather the last argument advanced a step farther.

If chance could be supposed to produce a regular form, yet it is certainly beyond the highest degree of credulity, to suppose, it could continue this regularity for any time. But we find it has been continued: we find, that near 6000 years have made no change in the order

order and harmony of the world. The sun's action upon the earth hath ever been regular. The production of trees, plants, and herbs, hath ever been uniform. Every seed produces now the same fruit it ever did. Every species of animal life is still the same. Could chance continue this regular arrangement? Could any thing continue it but the hand of an omnipotent God?

Lastly, we see this great truth, the being of a God, witnessed by the general consent of mankind. This general consent must arise either from tradition, or it must be the result of men's own reasoning. Upon either supposition, it is an argument equally strong. If the first supposition be allowed, it will be difficult to assign any source of this tradition, but God himself. If the second, it can scarce be supposed, that all mankind,

mankind, in different parts of the world, should agree in the belief of a thing, which never existed. For tho doubts have arisen concerning this general belief; yet it is now pretty well ascertained, from the accounts of travellers, that no nation hath yet been discovered, among whom some traces of religious worship have not been found.

Be it so, says the objector; yet still we find single persons, even in civilized countries, and some of them men of enlarged capacities, who have not only had their doubts on this subject; but have proclaimed aloud their disbelief of a divine being?

We answer, that it is more than probable, no man's infidelity on this head was ever thoroughly settled. Bad men,  
rather

rather endeavour to convince themselves, than are really convinced.—But even on a supposition, that a few such persons could be found,\* what is their testimony against so great a majority, as the rest of mankind? The light of the sun is universally acknowledged, though it happens, that now and then, a man may be born blind.

But since, it seems, there are difficulties in supposing a divine creator and preserver of the world, what system

*\* One of the most remarkable anecdotes of atheism is related of a person at Rome, who, it is said, was condemned for his infidelity; but had his life repeatedly offered, if he would acknowledge a deity. He refused, and suffered death with constancy. Mandeville, and Voltaire both glory in this hero, as destroying the whole testimony of martyrs. If the fact be true, (tho' I know not on what evidence it rests) one would suspect his understanding was injured; as the whole history of mankind perhaps affords not another such instance.*

of



of things does the atheist suppose attended with fewer? He sees the world produced before him. He sees it hath been created; and is preserved. Some account of this matter must be given. If ours displease him; let us have his.

The experiment hath been tried. We have had many atheistical creeds; none of which hath stood the test of being handed down with any degree of credit into future times.

The atheist's great argument indeed against a deity, is levelled at the apparent injustice of his government. It was an objection of ancient date; and might have had its weight in heathen times: but it is one of the blessings, which attends christianity, that it satisfies all our doubts on this head; and gives us a rational, and easy solution of this poignant

poignant objection. What if we observe an inaccurate distribution of the things of this world? What if virtue be depressed, and vice triumphant? It is nothing, says the voice of religion, to him, who believes this life to be an inconsiderable part of his being; a point only in the expanse of eternity: who believes he is sent into this world, merely to prepare himself for a better. This world, he knows, is intended neither for reward, nor punishment. Happiness unquestionably attends virtue even here; and misery, vice: but it is not the happiness of a splendid station; but of a peaceful mind: nor is it the misery of low circumstances, but of a guilty conscience. The things of this world are not, in their own nature, connected either with happiness or misery. Attended sometimes by one, and sometimes by the other, they are merely the means of trial.

trial. One man is tempted with riches, and another with poverty; but God intends neither an elevated, nor a depressed situation as the ultimate completion of his will.

Besides, if worldly prosperity even was the indication of God's favour, yet good men may have failings, and imprudencies enough about them to deserve misfortune; and bad men virtues, which may deserve success. Why should imprudence, tho joined with virtue, partake of its reward? Or the generous purpose share in the punishment, tho connected with vice?

Thus then we see the being of a God is the universal creed of nature. But tho nature could investigate the simple truth, she could not preserve it from error. Nature merely takes her notions  
from

from what she sees, and what she hears, and hath ever moulded her gods in the likeness of things in heaven, and things on earth. Hence every part of the creation, animate, and inanimate, hath, by turns, been an object of worship. And even the most refined nations, we know, had gross conceptions on this head. The wisest of them indeed, by observing the wonders of creation, could cloath the Deity with wisdom and power: but they could go no farther. The virtues of their heroes afforded them the highest ideas of perfection; and with these they arrayed their gods; mixing also with their virtues, such vices, as are found in the characters of the best of men.

For just notions of the Deity, we must have recourse then to revelation alone. Revelation removes all these absurdities.

absurdities. It dispels the clouds of ignorance; and unveils the divine majesty, as far as it can be the object of human contemplation. The lax notions of libertinism, on one hand, which make the deity an inobservant governor; and the glooming ideas of superstition, on the other, which suppose him to be a dark, malignant being, are equally exposed. Here we are informed of the omniscience, and omnipresence of God. Here we learn, that his wisdom and power are equalled by his goodness; and that his mercy is over all his works. In short, we learn from revelation, that we are in the hands of a being, whose knowledge we cannot evade, and whose power we cannot resist; who is merciful and good to all his creatures; and will be ever ready to assist, and reward those, who endeavour to conform themselves



themselves to his will : but whose justice, at the same time, accompanying his mercy, will punish the bold, and careless sinner in proportion to his guilt.

LEC.

## LECTURE IV.

Belief in Jesus Christ—that such a person lived, and was the author of a new religion, proved from Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny—that this person was the Messiah, proved from miracles and prophecies.

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**A**FTER professing our belief in God, the creed proceeds with a profession of our belief "in Jesus Christ, his son, our Lord."

A person celebrated as Jesus Christ was, we may suppose, would naturally find a place in the profane history of his times. It may not be amiss therefore, to introduce the evidence we are about to collect, with the testimony of some of the more eminent of the heathen writers, who have mentioned him. They will at least inform us, that such a person lived at the time we assert; and that he was the author of a new religion.—I shall quote only Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny.

Suetonius,\* tell us, that "the emperor Claudius drove all the Jews

\* *In vita Claud. Cæs.*

from

from Rome, who, at the instigation of one Christ, were continually making disturbances."

Tacitus\* speaking of the persecution of christians, tells us, " that the author of that name was Christ, who was put to death by Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius."

Pliny's † testimony is more large. It is contained in a letter, written to the emperor Trajan, desiring his instructions with regard to christians. He blames their obstinacy in refusing to sacrifice to the Roman deities—but from their own confession can draw nothing, but that they assemble, on a certain day, before sun rise,—that they pay divine honours to Christ as a God,—that they

\* *Lib. 15.*

† *Lib. 10.*

bind



bind themselves by a sacrament not to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to deceive—and that, after the performance of these rites, they join in one common meal. Nay he examined, he says, two of them by torture: yet still he finds nothing obnoxious in their behaviour, except their absurd superstitions. He thinks, however, the matter should be inquired into: for christianity had brought religion into great disuse. The markets were crouded with victims; and scarce a purchaser came near them.

These writers afford us sufficient testimony, that Jesus Christ lived, at the time we assert; and that he was the author of a new religion. They had opportunities of being well informed; could have no interest in falsifying; were no converts to the new sect; but  
talk

talk of Christ, only as they would of any singular person, whom they had occasion to mention. Their testimony therefore is beyond cavil.

Let us now proceed a step farther, and examine the scripture evidence of Christ, which proves not only his existence ; but that he is our Lord, or the Messiah—and not only that he was the author of a new religion ; but that this religion is true.

Upon examining the grand scripture evidence on this head, we find the greatest stress laid upon miracles and prophecies ; both of which are direct appeals to God, by a claim to supernatural power \*. And though both these

\* *The heathen had the same idea of a miracle, and ascribed every thing he saw, which was contrary to the common order of nature, to some miraculous power.*  
Thunder

modes of evidence are calculated as well for us, who live in remoter times, as for those, who lived in the earliest; yet the evidence from miracles seems more particularly addressed to them; as that from prophecy is to us. They were the eye-witnesses of the miracles of the gospel, of which we have only the evidence at second hand. Whereas prophecy is a mode of evidence, which increases through every age. The early christians had it in part; but to us this amazing web is still more unfolded; and more of its wonderful texture displayed.—Let us examine each in its order.

*Thunder issuing from a stormy sky, was in the usual course of things: but when*

————— *de parte serenâ*

*Intonuit* ———

*it was beyond nature; and immediately became a miracle.*

Among

Among the eye-witnesses of the gospel miracles, were many learned men, as well as unlearned. The former had opportunity and abilities to examine the works before them; to trace out fraud, if any such were latent; and did unquestionably receive them with all that circumspection which was due to such wonderful exhibitions, before they embraced the christian faith: while the most ignorant spectator was a competent judge of matter of fact; and many of our Saviour's miracles were such, as could not possibly, from the nature of the facts themselves, be coloured with fraud.

It had a strange sound to the prejudices of mankind, that a crucified malefactor was the Saviour of the world; and we cannot suppose, that any man, much less that a multitude of men,  
would

would embrace such a belief without clear conviction: especially as no worldly advantage lay on the side of this belief; and the convert even renounced the world, and embraced a life of persecution.—Let us consider the single miracle of Christ's resurrection. Jesus had frequently mentioned it before his death; and the thing was so far in general credited, that the sepulchre was sealed, and an armed guard appointed to watch it. We may well suppose therefore, that his favourers would naturally, upon this occasion, reason thus: "Jesus hath now put his pretensions upon a fair issue. He hath told us, he will arise from the dead on the third day:—here then let us suspend our judgment; and wait the result. Three days will determine, whether he be an impostor, or, the real Messiah."—It is  
very



very natural to suppose, that the favourers of Jesus would reason, after his death, in a manner like this: and it is beyond credibility, that any of them would have continued his disciples, had they found him falsifying in this point. But we know they did continue his disciples after this. We know also, that many proselytes, convinced by this very event, embraced the christian religion. — We have all the reason in the world therefore to believe, that they were fully satisfied. His miracles were to them a sufficient proof of his pretensions. All candid men would have acquiesced, as they did; and in their belief we have a very strong foundation for our own.

Again, with regard to prophecy, we observe, that the writers of the old testament seem, in various parts, to  
characterize

characterize some extraordinary person, who was in process of time to make his appearance in the world. The marks are peculiar, and can neither be mistaken nor misapplied. "He was to be born of a virgin—he was to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just—though dignified with the characters of a prince, he was to be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—tho described to be without sin, he was to be numbered with transgressors—his hands and his feet were to be pierced—he was to be made an offering for sin—and was never to see corruption."—These prophecies were published many hundred years before the birth of Christ; and had been all along in the hands, not only of the Jews, but of all men of letters. The old testament had been early translated into

into the greek language; and received into the politeſt libraries of thoſe times.

With theſe ideas, let us open the new teſtament, and it is obvious, that no picture can be more like its original, than theſe prophecies of Chriſt in one teſtament, are to his hiſtory in the other. Here we ſee that extraordinary virgin-birth unravelled.— Here we ſee a life ſpent in turning the hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt.— Here we find the prince of his people, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.— Here we ſee the Lord of righteouſneſs numbered with tranſgreſſors— we ſee his hands and his feet pierced— we ſee him made an offering for ſin— and we ſee realized that extraordinary idea of death without corruption.

It were an eaſy matter to carry this compariſon through a more minute detail

tail of circumstances : but I mean only to trace the outlines of this great resemblance. To compleat the picture would be a copious work.

Besides these predictions, which related immediately to the life and death of Christ ; there were many others, which deserve notice. Among these, the two great leading prophecies, were those of the calling of the Gentiles, and of the dispersion of the Jews.

The calling of the Gentiles was one of the earliest prophecies of the old testament. The Jews were distinguished in appearance, as the favourite people of God ; and they were sufficiently elated upon that distinction. But if they had attended closely to their prophets, they might have discovered, that all the prophecies, which described the happy  
state

state of the church, had evidently a more distant prospect, than to them. Those early promises, in particular, which were repeated to the patriarchs, were not merely confined to their posterity; but included "all the nations of the earth."\*—And when the later prophets, as the great event approached, spoke a plainer, and a more intelligible language, the whole nation might have understood, as Simeon, and some of the wisest, and most intelligible of them did understand, that "a light was sprung up to lighten the Gentiles."

The prophecy of the dispersion of the jewish nation is also very antient, being attributed by Moses to the patriarch Jacob. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, until Shiloh come." Whatever may be the precise meaning of the word sceptre in the original; and though

*See Gen. 12, iii. 18, xviii. 22, xviii. 26, iv.*

it



it may not perhaps properly signify that idea of regal power, which it conveys to our ears; yet it certainly means some badge of authority, that implies a formed and settled government. And as to the word Shiloh, all commentators, jewish as well as christian, explain it to mean the Messiah.—The sense therefore of the prophecy is plainly this—that the Jews should continue in the form of a society, till the time of the Messiah. Accordingly we find, that, soon after Christ's death, the sceptre did depart from Judah: the Jews lost all form of a political society; and are a singular instance of a people, scattered over the whole earth, preserved to this day separate from all other people, and yet without a settlement any where.

Our Saviour's prophecy of the growth of his church, is likewise among the  
more

more remarkable predictions. He told his disciples, that "his religion was like a grain of mustard seed, which was the least of all seeds ; but when it grew up, it should become a great tree, and the fowls of the air should lodge in the branches of it." He told them also, that "the gates of hell should never prevail against it,"

The jewish religion was continually enforced by the idea of a jealous God, watching over it, and threatening judgments from heaven upon every transgression. The divine authority was stamped openly upon it. The people trembled, and worshipped.

When the impostor Mahomet set up for a reformer, he could not indeed enforce his religion by divine judgments; but he did it by temporal. He drew  
his

his sword, and held it to the breasts of his opposers; while he promised to the obedient a full gratification of their passions.

But in the christian religion, nothing of this kind appeared. No temporal judgments threatened on one hand: no sensual indulgences allured on the other. A few desponding ignorant mechanics, the disciples of a person crucified as a common malefactor, were all the parade, with which this religion was ushered into the world; and all the human assistance, which it had to boast.— And yet this religion, which opposed the strongest prejudices, and was opposed by the greatest princes, made its way in a few years, from a remote corner, through the whole Roman empire.— Thus was our Saviour's prophecy, in opposition to all human calculation, exact-

F

ly

ly fulfilled. The least of all seeds became a spreading tree; and a church was established, which could not be destroyed by all the powers of hell.

But although the church of Christ could not be destroyed, it was corrupted; and in a course of years fell from its genuine purity. This corrupt state of it—the delusions of popery—the efforts of reformation, and various other circumstances relating to it, are not unreasonably supposed to be held forth, in the prophetic parts of the new testament.

But I forbear to dwell upon prophecies, which are not obvious enough to carry general conviction; tho many of them have been well explained by those,\*

\* See Bp. Newton's *dissertations*; and Bp. Hurd's *sermons on prophecy*.

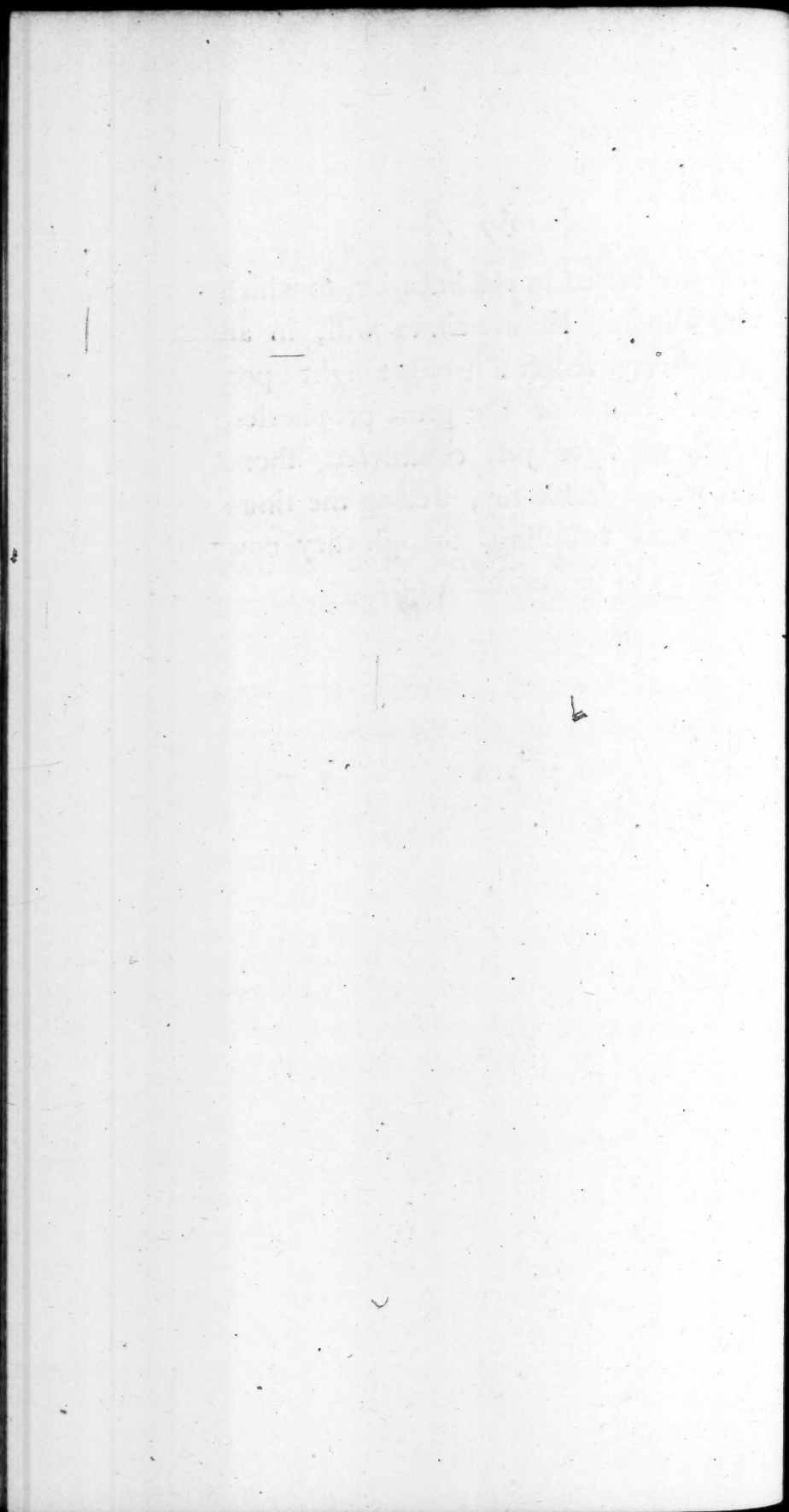
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who are versed in the histories, to which they allude. Future times will, in all probability, reflect a stronger light upon them. Some of the great prophecies, which we have just considered, shone but with a feeble ray, during the times they were fulfilling, though they now strike us in so forcible a manner,

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LE C.





## LECTURE V.

Objections to miracles, and prophecies—marks of distinction between true and false miracles—between true and false prophecies.—The truth of religion founded upon the combined force of its whole evidence.



**A** GAINST the evidence arising from miracles, and prophecy, we are well aware of what the deist objects—that false miracles have been wrought by impostors; and fallacious prophecies given out by oracles—and that we cannot suppose the miracles, and prophecies of the bible to be better founded; or in any degree, a more respectable criterion of truth.

We answer, that a very palpable distinction may be established.

First, the true miracle must fall under the examination of men's natural senses \*. When a priest displays a phial full of blood, which sometimes congeals, and sometimes liquifies, he has no right to our credit, unless he submit his phial to our examination. But when

\* See *Lesley's short method with deists*.

a man

a man is raised from the dead; when a man is cured of blindness; when two or three thousand people are fed by a pittance, there can be no deception: our senses, which are the only competent judges, have the means of judging.

Secondly, the true miracle must be performed before credible witnesses. A business huddled up in a cloister, before a few interested monks, is not properly attested. But when an action is performed before the publick eye, as most of the miracles of Christ were; or before witnesses, who have totally exculpated themselves of having any end, but that of truth, we have all the attestation we could wish.

Thirdly, the true miracle must have an elevated end in view. When we hear of a miracle abetting the interest of some little



little corrupt society, we cannot suppose the Almighty concerned in such an event. But the miracles of the gospel had other ends. They were employed to usher in an event, on which depended the salvation of mankind.

Fourthly, the true miracle must be handed down by authentic records, which, take their rise at the time, when the miracle was performed.\* A vague tradition, or an undated, legendary tale, is no record. But the christian may with great propriety appeal to the scriptures, which he first proves were written at the time, when the events they relate, were performed.

Lastly, the torture of question tends greatly to authenticate the real miracle. The false one abhors inquiry. At the reformation detections were abundant.

\* See Lesley's short method with deists.

But

But after the most rigorous question, the gospel-miracles have maintained their credit through the space of seventeen hundred years.

Having thus pointed out a few topics of distinction between true, and false miracles; it is as easy to point them out between true, and false prophecies.—The true prophecy, like the true miracle, has a more elevated end, and a more enlarged plan.

When we meet with a prophecy, the avowed end of which is to satisfy some trivial curiosity, or abet the designs of some ambitious leader, suspicion must needs take the alarm. This was evidently the character of the ancient oracles. However directed, whether by bad men, or bad spirits, they certainly spoke as they were paid, or intimidated.

But

But in the prophecies of the bible we find a different style. Marked neither by interested views, nor by servile compliances, they advance uniformly the same great end, which its miracles also proposed, the salvation of a ruined world.

Secondly, neither men, nor evil spirits ever gave an instance of the power of foretelling future events upon any enlarged plan. What were the decisions of oracles, but quibbling answers to some present question? Or opinions, to which human foresight was equal? Or at best the predictions of events confined to some short span of time? When did any oracle foretel an event a thousand years before its completion? Or from which of them do we find a series of prophecy issuing through different ages, the whole concurring in  
one

one point, and yet in every particular exactly fulfilled ?

Thus much in answer to the particular objections of the deist ; but let me farther add, (as a caution against his arts,) that we mean not to ground the truth of our religion upon detached parts, even upon miracles, and prophecies considered alone : but upon the whole scheme, and combined force of its evidence. In this way we judge of every thing else ; and when we judge otherwise, we shall probably make a false estimate. Who would judge of a building from a column ; or of a country from a field ? And yet in this partial view, the deist chiefly forms his cavils ; and imagines, he has gained a complete victory, when he tells us, that the miracles of the gospel are marked with the same characters, as the forceries of evil

evil spirits ; and its prophecies are just as incredible as the divinations of oracles. We should recommend it to him therefore to enlarge his views ; and examine the whole chain of evidence from the earliest accounts of time.

Let him first consider that remarkable promise of “ bruising the serpent’s head,” which was given as soon as the transgression was committed. This was the first dawn of hope, which God vouchsafed to a guilty world : and though the figurative language, under which it is couched, was dubious and obscure ; yet its meaning, though not fully understood, was easily conceived to contain some promise of victory over the adversary of mankind.

In a few ages after, its meaning was more opened ; and the hopes of an infant-



fant-world, thus raised, were increased by a very remarkable promise, that in the issue of one of the patriarchs, "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." And what is still more remarkable, the promise was repeated three several times. —Here, not only a victory over an enemy was announced; but a state of happiness in some shape was declared.

Let him next trace these hopes still increasing, and opening more and more through every age. In the patriarchal history, the sacrifice of Isaac, the deliverance from Egypt, the promised land, and a variety of other incidents, have much more dignity, and meaning, when we consider them, not barely as history; but as typical events leading the mind forward in the contemplation of some great scheme.

Still

Still more will he find these hopes excited by the types and ceremonies of the jewish law, which seem to have had little meaning, if they had no concealed one; and by the sacrifices, which prevailed over the greatest part of the known world—all pointing strongly at a particular mode of salvation, through a mediator, an atonement, and an offering for sin.

When he has examined these silent notices, let him next survey the prophetic writers of the old testament. Here he will find the same ideas—only expressed in bolder language, and a Saviour now pointed out, as we have \* just seen, by very peculiar characteristics.

\* See page 59.

He

He will find too among the heathen  
philosophers, historians, and poets \*  
many

\* Plato, who lived about 400 years before Christ, is one of the earliest writers, in whom we have any traits of this kind. He tells us, that "it is necessary, a divine instructor should teach us to pray" (*Alcib. 2d.*) "that as every creature is governed by a nature superior to its own, as beasts are by men; so it is necessary, that this divine instructor, who teaches man, what he could not know himself, must be of a nature superior to man, that is divine: (*De leg. l. 4.*)—that he must come recommended to us by none of the advantages of this world, but by virtue alone: that the wickedness of men would not bear his instructions, and reproof: and that within 3 or 4 years after he began to preach, he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and put to death." (*De repub. 2.*) One would imagine Plato had made a transcript from the 53d. chapter of *Isaiah*. It is remarkable, that he uses the word *ανακρινόμενος*, which may signify either to be crucified; or to be cut in pieces like a sacrifice.

Suetonius, in the life of *Vespasian*, has this remarkable expression: "*Percrebuerat, oriente toto, vetus, & constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur.*"—*Tacitus*, (*lib. 5.*) speaks almost

many very remarkable traits, however they came by them, of the expectation of some great instructor.

G

Thus

almost the same language. "*Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, ipso tempore fore ut valesceret oriens, profectiq. Judæa rerum potirentur.*"—Suetonius also, in the life of Augustus, (cap. 94.) alluding to the same opinion, 1st tells us that a child in such a year should be brought forth, and should be a king of the Romans. Upon which, says he, "*Senatum exterritum censuisse, ne quis illo anno genitus educaretur; eos autem, qui gravidas uxores haberent, (quo ad se quisq. spem traherat) curasse, ne senatus consultum ad ævarium deferretur.*"—It was an opinion also of this kind, that spirited up Lentulus to aid Catiline's conspiracy. The Sibylline oracles spoke of a king about to rise at that time; which different people interpreted in different ways: and Lentulus, as his interests led, supposed the oracle had respect to the Cornelian family. This his enemies brought as a crime against him, taxing him with certain vaunting speeches, "*quos ille habere solitus erat, ex libris sybyllinis, regnum Romæ tribus Corneliiis portendi.*" (Sal. Rell. Cat.)—All these notions Tully, as a philosopher, ridicules. "*Quid vis potius ex illis libris quam regem proferant; quem Romæ post hæc nec Dii, nec homines esse patientur.*"—Among the  
more

Thus prepared, let him take up the  
new Testament ; and compare all these  
notices,

*more remarkable passages in antiquity, on this subject,  
is the Pollio of Virgil. I shall not enter into any en-  
quiry about the Cumean Sibyl: whether Virgil got the  
substance of these verses from some of her remains?  
Nor, if he did, how she came by them? It is enough  
for my purpose, that a strong intimation of an extraor-  
dinary personage to be born at this time, is found in the  
works of a heathen poet. Some of the strongest passages,  
I shall quote.*

“ Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.  
Jam redit et virgo ; redeunt Saturnia regna :  
Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto,  
Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum  
Definet ; ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,  
Casta fave Lucina. —  
Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostræ  
Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.  
Ille Deum vitam accipiet, —  
Peccatumq. reget patriis virtutibus orbem.  
Occidet & serpens.” —

*The following lines,*

————— Flavescit campus aristâ,  
Incultisq. rubens pendebit sentibus uva.  
—— Nec magnos metuent armenta leones,

*scem*



notices, and prophecies with the history of Christ. Has he the candour to acknowledge any light reflected from one to the other? Can he account for all these

G 2

remarkable

*seem to be a transcript from the prophet Isaiah's ideas, expressing the tranquillity and happiness, which should take possession of all nature, upon the coming of the Messiah. " Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, " and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree. " —The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard " shall lie down with the kid; and the young lion, and " the fatling together."*

*I shall conclude these passages from the ancient writers of Greece and Rome, with one, which is said to be exactly translated from Confucius; though for myself, I rather doubt its authenticity! " How sublime are the ways of the holy one! What a noble course is opening before us! What laws, rites, and sacred solemnities! But how shall men observe them if HE does not set the example! HIS COMING alone can prepare us for them! The paths of virtue will never be frequented, till the HOLY ONE consecrate them by his own footsteps."*

*See Memoirs concerning the history, &c. of the Chinese, by the missionaries of Pekin. vol. 1. Paris 1776.*

remarkable resemblances (remarkable they certainly are) in any more consistent way ; or will he venture to allow, that a chain of evidence descends thus far unbroken ?

If he hath weighed all this with serious attention, it will not perhaps now give him so much offence to examine the miracles of the gospel. As the united parts of a regular plan they may probably appear to him now in a more advantageous light : and though he may not be inclined to allow them that consequence for which we contend ; yet he must certainly allow they make another link in this chain of evidence ; to which they give, and from which they receive, additional strength.

He may also consider that from the writers of the new testament issued a new series  
of

of prophecies, which after-ages have seen as exactly fulfilled, as those of the old.

Having thus examined the external evidence of the christian religion, let him consider farther, its strong\* internal evidence, arising from many sources, but particularly, from the purity of its doctrine. Let him candidly ask himself, if he does not think the christian religion bears all those marks of holiness, and purity, which he might expect from a revelation of God's will? What religion was ever calculated to make man happy, like the christian? If it should even be denied, that it makes individuals happier, from the many restraints

*\* Dr. Maclain, and other able writers, have shewn, in their remarks, upon a late very ingenious, and in many respects, very valuable performance, that to rest the cause of christianity merely upon its internal evidence, is a very injurious mode of proof.*

which

which it lays upon them (although these restraints are in fact only the dictates of reason) yet no one certainly can deny its direct tendency to promote the happiness of society. All solicitude about the things of this world, all ambitious desires, every little sinister interest, and with these every ground of contention, and every source of unhappiness, is removed; while every motive to benevolence is inculcated. In a word, to make themselves as happy as this world can make them, men need only become christians.

Nor let him end his enquiries here: let him next consider, that this religion was sealed by the blood of innumerable martyrs. For although martyrdom, in general, is rather an evidence of the sincerity of the sufferer, than of the truth of the opinion, yet the case of the early martyrs was different. They suffered,

not

not in support of opinions, but in attestation either of matter of fact ; or of original information, in which they could not be deceived.

Let his views open still farther, and discover to him this religion, (agreeable to the predictions of its author) taking possession of great part of the known world, against all the opposition of its enemies, and without any worldly assistance : let him see the heathen deities in all places giving ground before it—their rites and ceremonies abolished—and the use of sacrifice every where ceasing upon the completion of its end.—Let him have recourse for these things to his prophane history.

There also let him be informed of the total dispersion of the jewish nation, agreeable to the predictions he had read in his bible—a nation, which having  
been



been a mere vehicle to introduce the christian religion, immediately disperses, and loses all form of a political society, when that religion becomes established.

Let him seriously and attentively examine all this chain of evidence, (to which indeed many other links might be added) and he must acknowledge, that it is not a pert cavil against some particular miracle; a quaint objection to some obscure text; or an illiberal jest at the mysteries of religion, that can break it. It hangs so strong, so firm, and so connected, from the very beginning of time to this present moment, that he who examines it thoroughly, link by link, and the connection of the whole, must either think it sufficiently strong to hang his faith upon it, or must leave himself under the imputation of having a very bad head, or a very bad heart.

L E C.

## LECTURE VI.

Conception and birth of Christ—virgin Mary—circumstances and reality of Christ's death—descent into hell—a passage in St. Peter explained—the resurrection of Christ—not inconsistent with reason—the fact stated—the plea of the disciples—that of the chief priests refuted—acts of Pilate—modern objections examined—that the whole was a pious fraud—that it was done only before a few chosen witnesses—bounds of evidence—Christ did not lie three complete days and nights in the grave.

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WE have now shewn upon what foundation we believe the second article of our creed, let us next consider the remaining articles—the history of Christ, as delivered in scripture, and the benefits which he procured for us—the assistance of the Holy Spirit—the remission of our sins—and everlasting life.

First, then, we believe, that Christ was “conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin Mary.” The manner of this miraculous conception we inquire not into. It is a point not only beyond the limits of human inquiry; but to us at least a point very unimportant. We believe just the scripture account of it, and assure ourselves, that if it had concerned us, it would have been more plainly revealed.—One thing

thing, however, we may observe on this head, that nothing is said in scripture of paying divine honours to the virgin Mary. Those rites are totally of popish origin.

We farther believe, that Christ “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; and that he descended into hell,”——that is, we declare our belief of the scripture-account of the circumstances and the reality of Christ’s death.

To make an action clear, it is necessary, first, to establish its date. This is usually done by ranging it under the magistrate who then presided, the time of whose government is always registered in some public record.—Thus we believe that Christ’s death happened when Pontius Pilate was governor of  
Judea



Judea. We believe also, with regard to the manner of his death, that he was crucified ; that he died as really as any mortal ever did ; and that he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea\*.

The “ descent into hell” is undoubtedly a more obscure expression than might be wished in a creed, and was not indeed added till many ages after the creed was first composed †. But as creeds are human compositions, we believe this, and every other difficulty, only as consistent with scripture. Now the sense which seems most agreeable to scripture, is, that his soul remained till

\* *Isaiah foretold he should “ make his grave with the rich.” And St. Matthew tells us, that ὁψίας γενομενης, ἔθηκεν αὐτοῦ πλοῦτος.*

*Matt. xxvii. 57.      Isaiah. liii. 9.*

† See Bingham’s *Antiquities*, vol. iii. c. 3.

his

his resurrection in that place (whatever that place is) where the spirits of the blessed rest: and the expression seems to have been added, only that we may the more strongly express our belief of the reality of his death. This we do, when we express our belief of the separation of his soul and body. "He was buried;"—and "descended into hell." The first expression relates to his body, which was laid in the grave; the second to his soul, which passed into the place of departed spirits.

We farther believe, that "on the third day he rose again from the dead." The resurrection of Christ from the dead is a point of the utmost importance to christians. On the certainty of Christ's resurrection depend all hopes of our own. On this article, therefore, we shall be more large.

And,

And, in the first place, what is there in it that need shock our reason? It was a wonderful event: But is not nature full of wonderful events? When we seriously weigh the matter, is it less strange, that a grain of corn thrown into the ground should die, and rise again with new vegetation, than that a human body, in the same circumstances, should assume new life? The commonness of the former makes it familiar to us, but not in any degree less unaccountable. Are we at all more acquainted with the manner in which grain germinates, than with the manner in which a body is raised from the dead? And is it not obviously striking, that the same power which can effect the one, may effect the other also?—But analogy, though it tend to convince, is no proof. Let us proceed then to matter of fact.

That

That the body was dead, and safely lodged in the tomb, and afterwards conveyed out of it, was agreed on, both by those who opposed, and by those who favoured the resurrection. In the circumstances of the latter fact, they differ widely.

The disciples tell their story—a very plain and simple one—that, scarce expecting the event, notwithstanding their master had himself foretold it, they were surprised with an account, that the body was gone—that they found afterwards, to their great astonishment, that their master was again alive—that they had been several times with him; and appealed for the truth of what they said to great numbers, who, as well as themselves, had seen him after his resurrection.

The

The chief priests, on the other side, declared the whole to be a forgery; asserting, that the plain matter of fact was, the disciples came by night, and stole the body away, while the soldiers slept.

Such a tale, unsupported by evidence, would be listened to in no court of justice. It has not even the air of probability. Can it be supposed, that the disciples, who had fled with terror when they might have rescued their master's life; would venture, in the face of an armed guard, to carry off his dead body?—Or is it more probable, that they found the whole guard asleep; when we know, that the vigilance of centinels is secured by the strictest discipline?—Besides, what advantage could arise from such an attempt? If they miscarried, it was certain ruin, both to them and their cause. If they succeeded,

H



ceeded, it is difficult to say what use they could make of their success. Unless they could have produced their dead body alive, the second error would be worse than the first. Their master's prophecy of his own resurrection was an unhappy circumstance; yet still it was wrapped in a veil of obscurity. But if his disciples endeavoured to prove its completion, it was their business to look well to the event. A detection would be such a comment upon their master's text, as would never be forgotten.—When a cause depends on falsehood, every body knows, the less it is moved the better.

This was the case of the other side. Obscurity there was wanted. If the chief priests had any proof, why did they not produce it? Why were not the disciples taken up, and examined upon

upon the fact? They never absconded. Why were they not judicially tried? Why was not the trial made public? And why were not authentic memorials of the fraud handed down to posterity; as authentic memorials were of the fact, recorded at the very time, and place, where it happened? Christianity never wanted enemies to propagate its disparagement.—But nothing of this kind was done. No proof was attempted—except indeed the testimony of men asleep. The disciples were never questioned upon the fact; and the chief priests rested satisfied with spreading an inconsistent rumour among the people, impressed merely by their own authority.

Whatever records of heathen origin remain, evince the truth of the resurrection. One is very remarkable.

H 2

Pontius

Pontius Pilate sent the emperor Tiberius a relation of the death and resurrection of Christ; which were recorded at Rome, as usual, among other provincial matters. This intelligence made so great an impression, it seems, upon the emperor, that he referred it to the senate, whether Jesus Christ of Judea should not be taken into the number of the Roman gods?—Our belief of this fact is chiefly founded upon the testimony of Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, two learned heathens, in the age succeeding Christ, who became christians from this very evidence, among others, in favour of christianity. In their apologies, \* still extant, one of which was made to the senate of Rome, the other to a Roman governor, they both appeal to these records of Pontius Pi-

\* *Just. Mart. Apol. ad Anton. P.—Tertull. Apol. cap. 15.*

late,

late, as then generally known; which we cannot conceive such able apologists would have done, if no such records had ever existed \*.

Having seen what was of old objected to the resurrection of Christ, it may be proper also to see the objections of modern disbelievers.

\* *The acts of Pilate, as they are called, are often treated with contempt; for no reason, that I know. I never met with any thing against them of more authority than a sneer. Probable they certainly were; and a bare probability, when nothing opposes it, has its weight. But here the probability is strengthened by no small degree of positive evidence; which, if the reader wishes to see collected in one point of view, I refer him to the article of "Christ's suffering under Pontius Pilate," in bishop Pearson's exposition of the creed.*

*Among other authorities, that of the learned commentator on Eusebius, is worth remarking: "Fuere genuina Pilati acta; ad quæ provocabant primi christiani, tanquam ad certissima fidei monumenta."*

And, first, we have the stale objection, that nothing is more common among the propagators of every new religion, than to delude their ignorant proselytes with idle stories. What a variety of inconsistent tales did the votaries of heathenism believe? What absurdities are adopted into the Mahometan creed? To what strange facts do the vulgar papists give credit? And can we suppose better of the resurrection of Christ, than that it was one of those pious frauds, intended merely to impose upon the people, and advance the credit of the new sect?

This is just as easily said, as that his disciples stole him away, while the guard slept. Both are assertions without proof. But this objection, I trust, we have already answered, when we endeavoured to establish certain topics of distinction,



distinction, between true and false miracles \*.

Others have objected Christ's partial discovery of himself, after his resurrection. If he had boldly shewn himself to the chief priests ; or publicly to all the people ; we might have had a more rational foundation for our belief. But as he had only for his witnesses, upon this occasion, a few of his chosen companions, the thing has certainly a more secret appearance than might be wished.

This insinuation is founded upon a passage in the acts of the apostles, in which it is said, that " God shewed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God." The question is, what is meant by wit-

\* See page 71.

nesses chosen before of God ? Certainly nothing more than persons expressly, and by particular designation intended to be the witnesses of this event. Others might see him, if they pleased ; but these were not the people, to whom God shewed him openly : this particular designation was confined to the “ chosen witnesses.”—And is there any thing more in this, than we see daily in all legal proceedings ? Does not every body wish to have the fact, about which he is concerned, authenticated by indubitable records ; or by living testimony, if it can be had ? Do we not procure the hands of witnesses, appointed to this purpose, in all our deeds and writings ?—Let us not, however, answer the objection by an arbitrary explanation of the text : but let us compare this explanation with the matter of fact.

On

On the morning of the resurrection, the apostles, who ran to the sepulchre to make themselves acquainted with what they had heard, received a message from their master, injoining them, to meet him in Galilee. It does not appear, that this message was conveyed with any secrecy: it is rather probable it was not; and that the disciples told it to as many as they met. The women, it is expressly said, told it "to the eleven, and all the rest." Who the rest were, does not appear: but it is plain from the sequel, that the thing was generally known; and that as many as chose either to satisfy their faith, or gratify their curiosity, repaired for that purpose to Galilee. And thus we find St. Peter making a distinction between the voluntary and the chosen witness—between those "who had companied with the apostles all the time, that the Lord  
Jesus

Jesus went in and out among them, from his baptism till his ascension," and those who "were ordained to be the witnesses of his resurrection." \*

St. Paul goes farther, and in express words tells us, that Christ was seen † "after his resurrection of above five hundred brethren at once:" and it is probable, from the expression, "at once," that he was seen, at different times, by many more.

If then Christ thus appeared in Galilee to as many as chose to see him; or even if he appeared only to five hundred people, of whom St. Paul tells us, the greatest part were still alive, when he wrote his epistle, there can surely be no reasonable cause of offence at his appearing, besides these, to a few of his

\* Acts i. 21.

† 1 Cor. xv.

chosen

chosen companions, who attended by express appointment, as persons designated to record the event.

In fact, if the same method be pursued in this inquiry, which is usual in all others, the evidence of these chosen companions is all that is necessary. Here are twelve men produced (in general three or four men are thought sufficient) on whose evidence the fact depends. Are they competent witnesses? Have they those marks about them, which characterise men of integrity? Can they be challenged on any one ground of rational exception? If not, their evidence is as strictly legal, as full, and as satisfactory, as any reasonable man can require. — But in this great cause, we see the evidence is carried still farther. Here are five hundred persons waiting without, ready to add



add their testimony, if any one should require it, to what has already been more than legally proved. So that the argument even addresses itself to that absurd distinction, which we often find in the cavils of infidelity, between *rem certam*, and *rem certissimam*.

Upon the whole, then, we may affirm boldly, that this great event of the resurrection of Christ is founded upon evidence equal to the importance of it. If we expect still more, our answer is upon record: "If ye believe not Moses and the prophets," God's ordinary means of salvation, "neither will ye be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."—There must be bounds in all human evidence; and he who will believe nothing, unless he have every possible mode of proof, must be an infidel in almost every transaction of life.

With

With such persons there is no reasoning. They who are not satisfied, because Christ did not appear in open parade at Jerusalem; would farther have asked, if he had appeared in the manner they expected, why did he not appear to every nation upon earth? Or perhaps, why he did not shew himself to every individual?

To these objections may be added a scruple, taken from a passage of scripture, in which it is said that "Christ should lye three days, and three nights in the heart of the earth:" whereas, in fact, he only lay two nights, one whole day, and a part of two others.

But no figure in speech is more common than that of putting a part for the whole. In the Hebrew language perhaps this licence is more admissable,  
than

than in any other. A day and a night complete one whole day; and as our Saviour lay in the ground a part of every one of these three portions of time, he might be said, by an easy liberty of speech, to have lain the whole.

LEC.

## LECTURE VII.

Christ's ascension into heaven—last judgment—fruitless inquiries relative to it—scripture representation of this great event—belief in the Holy Ghost—its operations—scripture doctrine of the assistance we receive from it—heathen opinions on this point.

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WE believe farther, that Christ,  
“ascended into heaven, and  
sitteth on the right hand of God.”

Christ's ascension into heaven rests on the same kind of proof, as his resurrection. Both of them are events, which the apostles were "ordained to witness." But though their testimony in this case, as well as in the resurrection, is certainly the most legal, and authentic proof; and fully sufficient for any reasonable man; yet this does not exclude the voluntary testimony of others. It is evident, that the apostles were not the sole eye-witnesses of this event : for when St. Peter called together the first assembly of the church to chuse a successor to Judas Iscariot, he tells them, they must necessarily chuse one, out of those men, who had been witnesses of all that Christ did from

from his baptism, "till his ascension:" and we find, there were in that meeting an hundred and twenty persons,\* thus qualified.

Be it however as it will, if this article should rest on a less formal proof, than the resurrection, it is of no great consequence: for if the resurrection be fully proved, nobody can well deny the ascension. If the testimony of the evangelists be allowed to prove the one; their word may be taken to establish the other.

With regard to "the right hand of God," it is a scriptural expression used merely in conformity to our gross conceptions; and is not intended to imply any distinction of parts, but merely the idea of pre-eminence.

\* See Acts, i, 15.

We believe farther, that "Christ shall come to judge the quick, and the dead."

This article contains the most serious truth, that ever was revealed to mankind. In part it was an article of the heathen creed. To uninlightened nature it seemed probable, that, as we had, reason given us for a guide, we should hereafter be accountable for its abuse: and the poets, who were the prophets of early days, and durst deliver those truths under the veil of fable, which the philosopher kept more to himself, give us many traits of the popular belief on this subject \*. But the gospel alone threw a full light upon this awful truth.

In examining this great article, the curiosity of human nature, ever delight-

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\* See particularly the 6th book of Virgil's *Æn.*

ing to explore unbeaten regions, hath often been tempted, beyond its limits, into fruitless inquiries; scrutinizing the time of this event; and settling with vain precision, the circumstances of it. All curiosity of this kind is idle at least; if not presumptuous. When the Almighty hath thrown a veil over any part of his dispensation, it is the folly of man to endeavour to draw it aside.

Let us then leave all fruitless inquiries about this great event; and employ our thoughts chiefly upon such circumstances of it, as most concern us.—Let us animate our hopes with the soothing reflection, that we have our sentence, in a manner, in our own power,—that the same gracious gospel, which directs our lives, shall direct the judgment we receive,—that the same gracious person, shall

shall be our judge, who died for our sins—and that his goodness, we are assured, will still operate towards us; and make the kindest allowances for all our infirmities.

But lest our hopes should be too buoyant, let us consider, on the other hand, what an awful detail against us will then appear. The subject of that grand enquiry will be all our transgressions of known duty—all our omissions of knowing better—our secret intentions—our indulged evil-thoughts—the bad motives, which often accompany our most plausible actions—and, we are told, even our idle words.—“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”—Then shall it be known, whether we have answered the great ends of life?—Whether we have made this world subservient to a better?—Whether we have  
pre-



prepared ourselves for a state of happiness in heaven, by endeavouring to communicate happiness to our fellow-creatures upon earth? Whether we have restrained our appetites, and passions; and reduced them within the bounds of reason and religion? Or, whether we have given ourselves up to pleasure, gain, or ambition; and formed such attachments to this world, as fit us for nothing else; and leave us no hopes either of gaining, or of enjoying a better? It will be happy for us, if on all these heads of inquiry, we can answer without dismay.—Worldly distinctions, we know, will then be of no avail. The proudest of them will be then confounded. “Naked came we into the world; and naked must we return.” We can carry nothing beyond the grave, but our virtues, and our vices.

I shall

I shall conclude what hath been said on the last judgment with a collection of passages on this head from scripture ; where only our ideas of it can be obtained. And though most of these passages are figurative ; yet as figures are intended to illustrate realities, and are indeed the only illustrations of which this subject is capable, we may take it for granted, that these figurative expressions are intended to convey a just idea of the truth.—With a view to make the more impression upon you, I shall place these passages in a regular series ; though collected from various parts.

“ The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with his holy angels—The trumpet shall sound ; and all that are in the grave, shall hear his voice, and come forth—Then shall he sit upon the throne

throne of his glory; and all nations shall be gathered before him—the books shall be opened; and men shall be judged according to their works.—They who have sinned without law, shall perish, (that is be judged) without law; and they who have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.—Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.—Then shall he say to them on his right hand, come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. And to them on his left, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.—Then shall the righteous shine forth in the presence of their father; while the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.—What manner of persons ought we then to be in all holy conversation, and godliness?  
 looking

looking for, and hastening unto, the day of our Lord; when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.—

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless; that each of us may receive that blessed sentence, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a little, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

We believe, farther, in “the Holy Ghost;” that is, we believe every thing which the scriptures tell us of the Holy Spirit of God.—We inquire not into the nature of its union with the Godhead. We take it for granted, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have some kind of union, and  
some

some kind of distinction; because both this union and this distinction are plainly pointed out in scripture; but how they exist, we inquire not; concluding here, as in other points of difficulty, that if a clearer information had been necessary, it would have been afforded.

With regard to the operations of the Holy Spirit of God, (besides which, little more on this head is revealed) we believe, that it directed the apostles, and enabled them to propagate the gospel—and that it will assist all good men in the conscientious discharge of a pious life.

The scripture-doctrine, with regard to the assistance we receive from the Holy Spirit of God, (which is the most essential part of this article) is briefly this.

Our



Our best endeavours are insufficient. We are unprofitable servants, after all; and cannot please God, unless sanctified, and assisted by his Holy Spirit. Hence the life of a good man hath been sometimes called a standing miracle; something beyond the common course of nature. To attain any degree of goodness, we must be supernaturally assisted.

At the same time, we are assured of this assistance, if we strive to obtain it by fervent prayer, and a pious life. If we trust in ourselves, we shall fail. If we trust in God, without doing all we can ourselves, we shall fail likewise. And if we continue obstinate in our perverseness, we may at length totally incapacitate ourselves from being the temples of the Holy Ghost.

And

And indeed what is there in all this, which common life does not daily illustrate? Is any thing more common, than for the intellect of one man to assist that of another? Is not the whole scheme of education an infusion of knowledge and virtue not our own? Is it not evident too, that nothing of this kind can be communicated without application on the part of the learner? Are not the efforts of the teacher in a manner necessarily proportioned to this application? If the learner becomes languid in his pursuits, are not the endeavours of the teacher of course discouraged? And will they not at length wholly fail, if it be found in the end they answer no purpose?—In a manner analogous to this, the Holy Spirit of God co-operates with the endeavours of man. Our endeavours are necessary to obtain God's assistance: and the more earnestly these endeavours

endeavours are exerted, the measure of this grace will of course be greater. But, on the other hand, if these endeavours languish, the assistance of heaven will lessen in proportion ; and if we behave with obstinate perverseness, it will by degrees wholly fail. It will not always strive with man ; but will leave him a melancholy prey to his own vicious inclinations.

As to the manner, in which this spiritual assistance is conveyed, we make no inquiry. We can as little comprehend it, as we can the action of our souls upon our bodies. We are sensible, that our souls do act upon our bodies ; and it is a belief equally consonant to reason, that the divine influence may act upon our souls. The advocate for natural religion need not be reminded, that among the heathens, a divine  
influence

influence was a received opinion. The priests of every oracle were supposed to be inspired by their gods ; and the heroes of antiquity were universally believed to act under the influence of a supernatural assistance ; by which it was conceived they performed actions beyond human power \*.—This shews at least,

\* *Non hæc humanis opibus, non arte magistra :  
Major agit Deus, atque opera ad majora remittit.*

*Æn. xii. 427.*

*Nunquam vir magnus, sine divino afflatu.*

*Cic.*

*Non comptæ mansere comæ, sed pectus anhelum  
Et rabie fera corda tument ; majorque videri,  
Nec mortale sonans, afflata est numine quando  
Jam propiore dei* —————

*Æn. vi. 48.*

Nay, the great christian doctrine, that the assistance of heaven was to be obtained by prayer, is not certainly contrary to the dictates of reason. Thus the priestess of Apollo cried out to Æneas, who presented himself to beg the assistance of the god :

— *Ceſſas*

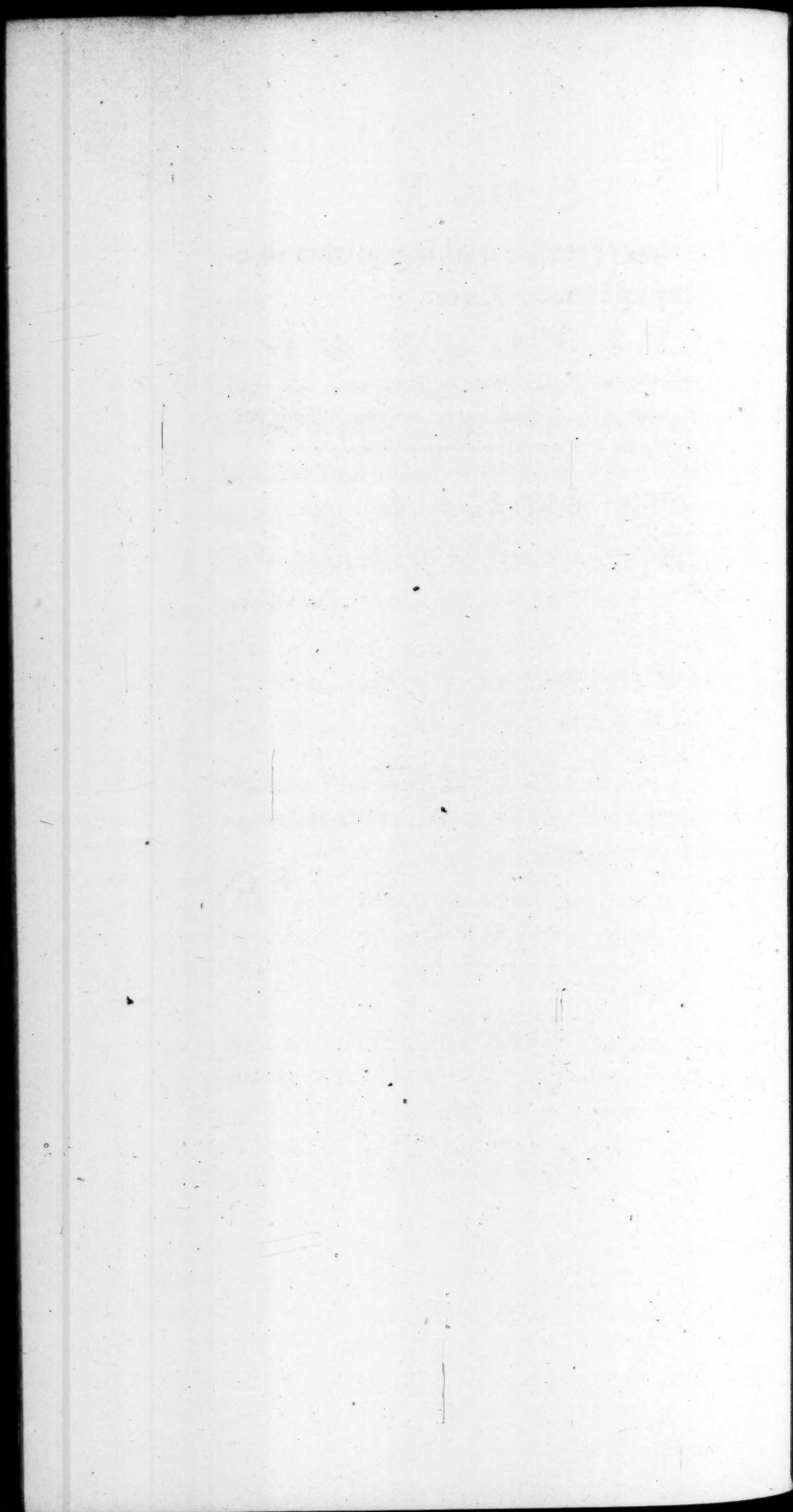
least, that there is nothing in this doctrine repugnant to reason.

————— *Cessas in vota precesque,*  
Tros, ait, *Æneas? cessas? neque enim ante debiscent*  
*Attonitæ magna ora domus.*—————

*Immediately upon which,*  
————— *Gelidus Tancriis per dura cucurrit*  
*Ossa tremor; fuditque preces rex pectore ab imo.*  
*Æn. vi. 51.*

LEC-





## LECTURE VIII.

Holy catholic church explained—communion of saints—forgiveness of sins—scripture-doctrine of sin, and guilt—satisfaction of Christ analogous to nature—sacrifice considered—first in the light of a type—secondly, as a deduction of human reason—useless inquiries into the manner of Christ's satisfaction—different kinds of sin—ignorance—negligence—surprize—habitual—presumptuous.

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**W**E believe, farther, in the “ holy catholic church,” and the “ communion of saints.”

“I believe in the holy catholic church,” is certainly a very obscure expression to a protestant; as it is very capable of a popish construction, implying our trust in the infallibility of the church; whereas we attribute infallibility to no church upon earth. The most obvious sense, therefore, in which it can be considered as a protestant article of belief, is this, that we call no particular society of christians a holy catholic church; but believe, that all true and sincere christians, of whatever communion, or particular opinion, shall be the objects of God’s mercy. The patriarchal covenant was confined to a few. The jewish church stood also on a very narrow basis. But the christian church, we be-

lieve, is truly catholic : its gracious offers are made to all mankind ; and God through Christ will take out of every nation such as shall be saved.

The “ communion of saints,” is an expression equally obscure : and whatever might have been the original meaning of it, it certainly does not resolve itself into a very obvious one to us. If we say, we mean by it, that good christians living together on earth, should exercise all offices of charity among themselves, no one will contradict the article ; but many perhaps may ask, Why is it made an article of faith ? It relates not so much to faith, as to practice : and the ten commandments might just as well be introduced as articles of our belief.

To



To this I can only suggest, that it may have a place among the articles of our creed, as a test of our enlarged ideas of christianity, and as opposed to the narrow-mindedness of some christians, who harbour very uncharitable opinions against all who are not of their own church ; and scruple not to shew their opinions by uncharitable actions. The papists particularly deny salvation to any but those of their own communion, and persecute those of other persuasions where they have the power.—In opposition to this, we profess our belief of the great christian law of charity. We believe we ought to think charitably of good christians of all denominations ; and ought to practise a free and unrestrained communion of charitable offices towards them.

In

In this light the second part of the article depends upon the first. By the "holy catholic church," we mean all sincere christians, of whatever church, or peculiarity of opinion; and by "the communion of saints," a kind and charitable behaviour towards them.

Though it is probable this was not the original meaning of the article, yet as the reformers of the liturgy did not think it proper to make an alteration, we are led to seek such a sense as appears most consistent with scripture.—We are assured, that this article, as well as the "descent into hell," is not of the same antiquity as the rest of the creed. \*

We profess our belief farther in the "forgiveness of sins."—The scripture-

\* See Bingham's *Antiq.* vol. iv. chap. 3.

doctrine

doctrine of sin, and of the guilt, which arises from it, is this.

Man was originally created in a state of innocence, yet liable to fall. Had he persevered in his obedience, he might have enjoyed that happiness, which is the consequence of perfect virtue. But when this happy state was lost, his passions and appetites became disordered, and prone to evil. Since that time we have all been, more or less, involved in sin, and are all therefore, in the scripture-language, "under the curse;" that is, we are naturally in a state of unpardoned guilt.

In this mournful exigence, what was to be done? In a state of nature, it is true, we might be sorry for our sins. Nature too might dictate repentance. But sorrow and repentance, though they  
may

may put us on our guard for the future, can make no atonement for sins already committed. A resolution to run no more into debt may make us cautious; but can never discharge a debt already contracted. \*

In this distress of nature, Jesus Christ came into the world. He threw a light upon the gloom that surrounded us.— He shewed us, that in this world we

\* Thus Mr. Jenyns expresses the same thing: “ The punishment of vice is a debt due to justice, which cannot be remitted without compensation: repentance can be no compensation. It may change a wicked man’s dispositions, and prevent his offending for the future; but can lay no claim to pardon for what is past. If any one by profligacy and extravagance contracts a debt, repentance may make him wiser, and hinder him from running into farther distresses, but can never pay off his old bonds, for which he must be ever accountable, unless they are discharged by himself, or some other in his stead.”

*View of the Inter. Evid. p. 112.*

were

were lost—that the law of nature could not save us—that the tenor of that law was perfect obedience, with which we could not comply—but that God, thro his mediation, offered us a method of regaining happiness—that he came to make that atonement for us, which we could not make for ourselves—and to redeem us from that guilt, which would otherwise overwhelm us—that faith and obedience were, on our parts, the conditions required in this gracious covenant—and that God promised us, on his, the pardon of our sins, and everlasting life—that we were first therefore to be made holy through the gospel of Christ, and then we might expect salvation through his death: “Us, who were dead in trespasses and sins, would he quicken. Christ would redeem us from the curse of the law. By grace we should be saved through faith; and  
that



that not of ourselves : it was the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast ”

This doctrine is generally called the satisfaction or the atonement of Christ, and has given more offence to the deist than almost any part of the christian scheme. “ Could not God, he cries, forgive us freely, and save us without an expedient which sounds so harshly in our ears ? The Son of God comes down upon earth, and suffers death—for what ? Why to take upon himself the sins of man ; and, in the scripture-phrase, to nail them to his cross.

This is surely unbecoming language. How can any one presume to assert, that we may be forgiven freely, unless he can perfectly scan, and thoroughly understand, God’s whole scheme of moral

ral government? What do we know of the nature of unatoned sin and guilt? or of the immutable laws of eternal justice? Can the deist give us any account of these things? Or can he reconcile sin and justice in so satisfactory a manner, even to human reason, as the scripture does, in the account it gives us of the fall of man, and of his restoration through Christ? Nothing is more easy than to cavil; nothing more difficult than to form a consistent plan in opposition to the truth.

Again, how can the deist talk of the redemption of the world by Christ, as an expedient that sounds so harshly in our ears? It is true, it is an astonishing event, and, in all its greatness, wholly new and unparallelled: but yet, when God has revealed it to us, our reason totally closes with it. We are reconciled

ciled to it by observing it analogous to God's whole scheme of moral government; and to the use of sacrifices, which every where prevailed in the world.

What is the whole state of infancy and youth, from one end to the other, but a continued scene of preventing, and of rescuing from evils, at the expence of pains, and care, and suffering, in the master, the friend, the parent, or whoever acts the part of the kind mediator?—How many, again, after they are advanced in life, do we daily see brought into such circumstances, that, without the friendly mediation of their fellow-creatures, they would be totally ruined? Some, through the means of others, are relieved from painful disorders, under which they might have languished to the end of life. Others, again, through their follies and excesses

ses have brought their affairs into such a state of ruin, as could never be redeemed, unless their friends, by an expensive mediation, should interfere.

These instances, and many others, that might be drawn from the circle and commerce of human life, and many, in which innocence suffers for guilt, shows at least, that the sufferings of Christ for mankind, and the redemption of the world through those sufferings, are analogous to that stated order of things, and ordinary course of moral government, which God has established in the world. If our reason be not shocked in one case, why should it be so in the other?—Let us then take in the whole scheme of things, and not garble it as we please. Let us boldly and atheistically call God's whole plan of moral government a scheme of folly

folly and impotence ; and not, with the inconsistency of a timid deist, allow one part, and question the rest.

The deist may be farther asked, What he thinks of the origin of sacrifices ? A sacrifice is a rite so apparently absurd, that one would hardly imagine any one could prescribe it to himself : and yet we know, that all nations, however remote, and unconnected with each other, joined in it with one consent.—Let us press the deist a little upon this head. Whence is it, does he think, that all the world has joined in so strange a rite, as that of putting an innocent creature to death, to appease the anger of an incensed God ? \* Can  
he

\* *It would be endless to quote passages from heathen writers. I shall just mention a few which first occur. When Horatius killed his sister, Livy tells us,*  
he



he give any rational account of its origin and institution?—Or is he constrained to allow with us, that the only rational account of this matter is, that the use of sacrifices was instituted by God himself, and enjoined to our first parents, immediately upon the fall,

he was pardoned, “ *Quibusdam piacularibus sacrificiis factis.*” *Lib. 1.*

*Dido proposing to appease Jupiter, orders one of her attendants,*

— *pecudes secum, & monstrata piacula ducat.*

*Æn. iv. 636.*

*The idea of an atonement is thus strongly expressed by Virgil:*

*Unum pro multis dabitur caput.*—

*Æn. v. 815.*

*But still stronger is a passage in Cæsar, where, speaking of the human sacrifices of the Germans, he says, “ Pro vita hominis nisi vita hominis reddatur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur. Publicaq. ejusdem generis habent instituta sacrificia.”*

*Cæs. Com. lib. vi.*

and

and so continued, as a type of that great sacrifice, which was afterwards to be offered for the sins of men?—A type, we know, is intended as an introduction to the thing typified : and men through all ages, from father to son, have acquiesced in a practice, without knowing from whence they had it, that they might silently fulfil, though without intending it, the secret purposes of heaven ; which meant by this rite to introduce gradually the idea of that great sacrifice which was to be made for the sins of the world ; and which, however late it became visible, was slain in effect “ from the foundation of the world,” and began unquestionably to operate for the good of man, from the instant of the fall. Sacrifices might perhaps then be, what the Lord’s supper now is, a sort partaking of the body and blood of Christ. And what is still more remarkable,

able, the type became universally abolished, wherever it became fulfilled.

Does the unbeliever acquiesce in this account of the origin of sacrifice? Or, will he rather resolve it into some general deduction of human reason, and attribute it to the mere invention of man?

Be it so. On this ground let us follow him: and on this ground he must at least allow, that the use of sacrifice proves all mankind to have had, from nature, an idea, that they stood in need of other merits, besides their own, to redeem them from sin—that the light of reason pointed the necessity of some atonement to make up their own deficiencies—and that offering the life of an innocent creature for their transgressions, came the nearest of any thing, they could conceive, to the idea of such an atonement.

L

Thus

Thus this great article of our faith, though so offensive to many of the advocates for reason, appears both similar to God's moral government, and agreeable to the general sense of mankind. God is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever: and a connection, a uniformity, and analogy run through all his works, if it was in our power to trace them with accuracy, and precision.

If the unbeliever still inquires farther; and cannot acquiesce without a plain account of the manner, in which the death of Christ satisfies God for the sins of the world, we must here be constrained to leave him. In such inquiries he will rarely meet with satisfaction. But let him be consistent. Let him be an universal sceptic. Let him doubt a future state. Let him doubt the immortality of his soul. Let him doubt even his own existence: for which of these things can  
he

he explain?—If we think justly, we should distinguish between what is, and what is not, capable of proof. Let us try the truth of scripture by every method, that human reason can invent : but let us not imagine, that human reason can comprehend the whole system of the Christian religion. We enter freely into a rational proof of the being of a God : but we do not presume to comprehend his attributes. What relates to man in the scheme of our redemption is very clear. God's part indeed is beyond our comprehension. But with this we have little to do. What is it to us, in what manner God performs this gracious work ? Our concern lies nearer home. God has offered us the pardon of our sins, and everlasting life through the merits of Christ. But if, in the niceness of our casuistry, we reject this offer,—we may



have reason to repent—if we reject it through negligence, we certainly shall.

That we may have a more complete view of the danger of sin, (the cause of our misery, and of our Saviour's death) I shall conclude this article with enumerating its several kinds.

And first I shall mention the lightest in this catalogue, sins of ignorance. A man may commit a sin without knowing it. He may have his doubts, at the time of acting, without the means of solving them. His ignorance does not alter the nature of the action in itself; though it mitigates the guilt in him. Such sins indeed, one would hope, are small offences in the eyes of a merciful God:—and yet St. Paul heavily bewails, his having persecuted the church of Christ, notwithstanding he did it ignorantly.

But

But St. Paul had few sins to repent of, but those of ignorance.

Sins of negligence are more involved in guilt. Not to use the opportunities we have, argues great coolness in religion; and great inattention to our duty. — And on this head we should be much upon our guard: for many sins, which may perhaps appear to be those of ignorance only, may in fact be charged upon our own negligence, and want of attention to those means of knowing better, which God hath afforded us.

Next to these we may rank sins of surprize; into which we are commonly betrayed by some sudden temptation. Sins of this kind should be sincerely repented of, and manfully withstood. — If through our indulgence we suffer them to get ground upon us, they are no longer

ger sins of surprize : they change their name ; and must be classed under the head of habitual sins.

Habitual sins are stained with a very high degree of guilt. When we thus become the slaves of vice, our minds are tainted, and the sense of religion is lost. Even smaller sins, when their fibres are thus woven into our nature, attain enormous growth. Of this also we may be assured, that when we have thus lost the command of ourselves, we may proceed any length.—If a proper temptation arises, what is there to check us?—We may be carried to the last degree of wickedness ; to which the scriptures give the name of presumptuous sins.

By presumptuous sins are meant those black crimes ; which have no want of know-

knowledge to excuse—no sudden temptation to extenuate; but are acted with deliberate contrivance; in open defiance of law, conscience, and religion; and attended with all those horrid circumstances, which shew the last depravity of human nature.

From the guilt of every kind of sin let us guard with all our care. In presumptuous sins none of us, I should hope, can well be involved. The mind yet unhardened, starts with horror at such black transgressions. Let us then always endeavour to keep alive this quick sensibility; and preserve ourselves at least from habitual sins: for these are what first corrupt us. If we are not intangled in these, we may hope, that all our sins of negligence and surprize, if we guard against them as well as human frailty will permit, may find forgiveness

giveness through the merits of Christ,  
at the hands of that God, who knowing  
the infirmities of his creatures, is not  
extreme to mark what they have done  
amiss.

LEC.



## LECTURE IX.

Immortality of the soul—agreeable to reason—resurrection of the body—scripture doctrine on this head—application of it—future state of happiness—how described in scripture—future state of misery—the eternity of it a doctrine of reason—scripture account of it—application of the doctrine.

THE  
JOURNAL  
OF THE  
AMERICAN  
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
CHICAGO, ILL., U.S.A.

# LECTURE

ON THE  
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LUNGS  
AND  
BRONCHIAE  
BY  
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WE believe farther “ in the resurrection of the body.”—This article presumes our belief in the immortality of the soul.

What that principle of life is, which we call the soul ; how it is distinguished from mere animal life ; how it is connected with the body ; and in what state it subsists, when its bodily functions cease ; are among those indissoluble questions, with which nature every where abounds. But notwithstanding the difficulties, which attend the discussion of these questions, the truth itself hath in all ages of the world been the popular creed. Men believed their souls were immortal from their own feelings, so impressed with an expectation of immortality — from observing the progressive state of the soul, capable, even after the  
body

body had attained its full strength, of still higher improvements both in knowledge, and in habits of virtue—from the analogy of all nature, dying and reviving in every part—from their situation here so apparently incomplete in itself; and from a variety of other topics, which the reason of man was able to suggest.—But though nature could obscurely suggest this great truth; yet Christianity alone threw a clear light upon it, and impressed it with a full degree of conviction upon our minds.

But the article before us proceeds a step farther. It not only implies the immortality of the soul; but asserts the resurrection of the body.—Nor was this doctrine wholly new to nature. In its conceptions of a future life, we always find the soul in an imbodyed state. It was airy indeed and bloodless; but still it  
had

had the parts of a human body, and could perform all its operations.

In these particulars the scripture does not gratify our curiosity. From various passages we are led to believe, that the body shall certainly rise again: but in what manner, or of what substance, we pretend not to examine. We learn "that it is sown in corruption, and raised in incorruption, that it is sown in dishonour, and raised in glory; that it is sown a natural body, and raised a spiritual body:" from all which we gather, that whatever fameness our bodies may have, they will hereafter take a more spiritualized nature; and will not be subject to those infirmities, to which they were subject on earth. Farther on this head, it behoves us not to inquire.

Instead



Instead, therefore, of entering into any metaphysical disquisitions of identity, or any other curious points, in which this deep subject might engage us, all which, as they are founded upon uncertainty, must end in doubt, it is better to draw this doctrine, as well as all others, into practical use: and the use we ought to make of it is, to pay that regard to our bodies, which is due to them—not vainly to adorn—not luxuriously to pamper them; but to keep them as much as possible from the pollutions of the world; and to lay them down in the grave undefiled, there to be sealed up in expectation of a blessed resurrection.

Lastly, we believe “in the life everlasting;” in which article we express our faith in the eternity of a future state of rewards and punishments.

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This article is nearly related to the last, and is involved in the same obscurity. In what the reward of the virtuous will consist, after death, our reason gives us no information. Conjecture indeed it will, in a matter which so nearly concerns us; and it hath conjectured in all ages: but information it hath none, except from the word of God; and even there, our limited capacities can receive it only in general and figurative expressions. We are told, “there will then reign fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore—that the righteous shall have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away—where they shall shine forth, as the sun, in the presence of their father—where error, and sin, and misery shall be no more—where shall be assembled an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of the church, the spirits

rits of just men made perfect—that they shall neither hunger, nor thirst any more—that all tears shall be wiped from their eyes—that there shall be neither death, nor sorrow, nor pain.”

From these, and such expressions as these, though we cannot collect the entire nature of a future state of happiness, yet we can easily gather a few circumstances, which must of course attend it; as, that it will be very great—that it will last for ever—that it will be of a nature entirely different from the happiness of this world—that, as in this world, our passions and appetites prevail; in the next, reason and virtue will have the superiority — “hunger and thirst, tears and sorrow,” we read, “will be no more”—that is, all uneasy passions and appetites will then be annihilated—all vain fears will be then removed

moved—all anxious and intruding cares—and we shall feel ourselves complete and perfect; and our happiness, not dependent, as here, upon a thousand precarious circumstances, both within and without ourselves, but consistent, uniform, and stable.

On the other hand, we pretend not to inquire in what the punishment of the wicked consists. In the scripture we find many expressions, from which we gather, that it will be very great. It is there called, “an everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels—where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched—where shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth—where the wicked shall drink of the wrath of God, poured without mixture, into the cup of his indignation—where they shall have no rest, neither by day nor night.”

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Though it becomes us certainly to put our interpretations with the greatest caution and humility upon such passages as these; yet “the worm that never dieth,” and “the fire that is never quenched,” are strong expressions, and hardly to be evaded by any refinements of verbal criticism. Let the deist bravely argue down his fears, by demonstrating the absurdity of consuming a spirit in material fire. Let him fully explain the nature of future punishment; and convince us, that where it cannot reform, it must be unjust.—But let us, with more modesty, lay our hands humbly upon our breasts, confess our ignorance; revere the appointments of God, whatever they may be; and prepare to meet them with holy hope, and trembling joy, and awful submission to his righteous will.

To



To the unenlightened heathen the eternity of future punishments appeared no such unreasonable doctrine. Their state of the damned was of eternal duration. A vulture for ever tore those entrails, which were for ever renewed. \*

Of one thing, however, we may be well assured, (which may set us entirely at rest in all our enquiries on this deep subject,) that every thing will, in the end, be right—that a just and merciful God must act agreeably to justice and mercy—and that the first of these at-

\* ——— *Rostroq. immanis vultur obunco  
Immortale jecur tundens, fœcundaq. pœnis  
Viscera.*—————

*Æn. vi. 596.*

————— *Sedet, æternumq. sedebit  
Infelix Theseus.*—————

*Ib. 616.*

tributes

tributes will most assuredly be tempered with the latter.

From the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, the great and most convincing practical truth which arises, is, that we cannot exert too much pains in qualifying ourselves for the happiness of a future world. As this happiness will last for ever, how beneficial will be the exchange—this world, “which is but for a moment, for that everlasting weight of glory, which fadeth not away.”

Vice, on the other hand, receives the greatest discouragement from this doctrine, as every sin we commit in this world may be considered as an addition to an everlasting account in the next.

## LECTURE X.

The ten commandments—not a complete rule of duty—division of them, and short commentary upon them—our duty to God—belief—fear—love—objections to the goodness of God—measures of the love of God.

LECTURE

The first part of the lecture was devoted to a discussion of the history of the subject. The speaker then turned to the present state of the subject, and discussed the various theories which have been advanced to explain the phenomena observed. He then concluded by pointing out the need for further research in this field.

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HAVING considered the articles of our faith, we proceed to the rules of our practice. These, we know, are of such importance, that, let our faith be what it will, unless it influence our lives, it is of no value. At the same time, if it be what it ought to be, it will certainly have this influence.

On this head, the ten commandments are first placed before us; from which the composers of the catechism, as well as many other divines, have drawn a compleat system of christian duties. But this is perhaps rather too much. \* Both Moses,

\* In the fourth volume of bishop Warburton's commentary on Pope's works, in the second satyr of Dr. Donne, are these lines :

*Of whose strange crimes no canonist can tell  
In which commandment's large contents they dwell.*

“ The



Moses, in the law, and Christ in the gospel, seem to have enlarged greatly on morals : and each of them, especially the latter, to have added many practical rules, which do not obviously fall under any of the commandments.

But though we cannot call the decalogue a compleat rule of duty, we accept it with the utmost reverence, as the first great written law that ever God communicated to man. We consider it as an eternal monument, inscribed by

*“ The original,” says the bishop, “ is more humorous.*

*In which commandment’s large receipt they dwell ;*

*“ as if the ten commandments were so wide, as to  
“ stand ready to receive every thing, which either  
“ the law of nature, or the gospel commands. A just  
“ ridicule on those practical commentators, as they  
“ are called, who include all moral and religious  
“ duties within them.”*

the

the finger of God himself, with a few strong, indelible characters; not defining the minutiae of morals; but injoining those great duties only, which have the most particular influence upon the happiness of society; and prohibiting those enormous crimes, which are the greatest sources of its distress.

The ten commandments are divided into two parts, from their being originally written upon two tables. From hence one table is supposed to contain our duty to God; the other, our duty to man. But this seems to be an unauthorized division; and hath a tendency to a verbal mistake; as if some duties were owing to God; and others to man: whereas in fact we know that all duties are equally owing to God.—However, if we avoid this misconception, the division into our duty to God, and  
our

our duty to man, may be a convenient one.—The four first commandments are contained in the first table : the remaining six in the second.

At the head of them stands a prohibition to acknowledge more than one God.

The second commandment bears a near relation to the first. The former forbids polytheism ; the latter idolatry : and with this belief, and practice, which generally accompanied each other, all the nations of the earth were tainted, when these commandments were given : especially those nations, by whom the Jews were surrounded.

The third commandment enjoins reverence to God's name. This is a strong religious restraint in private life;  
and

and as a solemn oath is the strictest obligation among men, nothing can be of greater service to society, than to hold it in general respect.

The fourth commands the observance of the sabbath ; as one of the best means of preserving a sense of God, and of religion in the minds of men.

The second table begins with injoining obedience to parents ; a duty in a peculiar manner adapted to the jewish state, before any regular government was erected. The temporal promise, which guards it, and which can relate only to the jews, may either mean a promise of long life to each individual, who observed the precept : or, of stability to the whole nation upon the general observance of it : which is perhaps a better interpretation.

The

The five next commandments are prohibitions of the most capital crimes, which pollute the heart of man, and injure the peace of society.

The first of them forbids murder, which is the greatest injury that one man can do another; as of all crimes the damage in this is the most irreparable.

The seventh commandment forbids adultery. The black infidelity, and injury which accompany this crime; the confusion in families, which often succeeds it; and the general tendency it hath to destroy all the domestic happiness of society, stain it with a very high degree of guilt.

The security of our property is the object of the eighth commandment.

The



The security of our characters, is the object of the ninth.

The tenth restrains us not only from the actual commission of sin; but from those bad inclinations, which give it birth.

After the commandments follows a commentary upon them, intitled, "our duty to God," and "our duty to our neighbour:" the latter of which might more properly be intitled, "Our duty to our neighbour, and ourselves."—These seem intended as an explanation of the commandments upon Christian principles; with the addition of other duties, which do not properly fall under any of them. On these we shall be more large.

The

The first part of our duty to God, is, "to believe in him;" which is the foundation of all religion, and therefore offers itself first to our consideration. But this great point hath been already considered. \*

The next branch of our duty to God, is to fear him. The fear of God is impressed equally upon the righteous man, and the sinner. But the fear of the sinner consists only in the dread of punishment. It is the necessary consequence of guilt; and is not that fear, which we consider as a duty. The fear of God here meant, consists in that reverential awe, that constant apprehension of his presence, which secures us from offending him.—When we are before our superiors, we naturally feel a respect, which prevents our doing any

\* See page 93.

thing indecent in their sight. Such (only in a higher degree) should be our reverence of God, in whose sight, we know, we always stand. If a sense of the divine presence hath such an influence over us, as to check the bad tendency of our thoughts, words, and actions; we may properly be said to be impressed with the fear of God.—If not, we neglect one of the best means of checking vice, which the whole circle of religious restraint affords.

Some people go a step farther; and say, that as every degree of light behaviour, though short of an indecency, is improper before our superiors; so is it likewise in the presence of almighty God, who is so much superior to every thing, that can be called great on earth.

But

But this is the language of superstition. Mirth, within the bounds of innocence, cannot be offensive to God. He is offended only with vice. Vice, in the lowest degree, is hateful to him : but a formal, set behaviour, can be necessary only to preserve human distinctions.

The next duty to God is that of love, which is founded upon his goodness to his creatures. Even this world, mixed as it is with evil, exhibits various marks of the goodness of the Deity. Most men indeed place their affections too much upon it, and rate it at too high a value : but in the opinion even of wise men, it deserves some estimation. The acquisition of knowledge, in all its branches ; the intercourse of society ; the contemplation of the wonderful works of God, and all the beautiful

teous scenes of nature; nay, even the low inclinations of animal life, when indulged with sobriety and moderation, furnish various modes of pleasure and enjoyment.

Let this world however go for little. In contemplating a future life, the enjoyments of this are lost. It is in the contemplation of futurity, that the christian views the goodness of God in the fullest light. When he sees the Deity engaging himself by covenant to make our short abode here a preparation for our eternal happiness hereafter—when he is assured, that this happiness is not only eternal, but of the purest and most perfect kind—when he sees God, as a father, opening all his stores of love and kindness, to bring back to himself a race of creatures fallen from their original perfection, and

N                      totally



totally lost through their own folly, perverseness, and wickedness; then it is that the evils of life seem as atoms in the sun-beam; the divine nature appears overflowing with goodness to mankind, and calls forth every exertion of our gratitude and love.

That the enjoyments of a future state, in whatever those enjoyments consist, are the gift of God, is sufficiently obvious: but with regard to the government of this world, there is often among men a sort of infidelity, which ascribes all events to their own prudence and industry. Things appear to run in a stated course; and the finger of God, which acts unseen, is never supposed.

And, no doubt, our own industry and prudence have a great share in procuring for us the blessings of life. God  
hath

hath annexed them as the reward of such exertions. But can we suppose, that such exertions will be of any service to us, unless the providence of God throw opportunities in our way? All the means of worldly happiness are surely no other than the means of his government. Moses saw among the jews a kind of infidelity like this, when he forbad the people to say in their hearts, "My power, and the might of my hands hath gotten me this wealth:" whereas, he adds, they ought to remember, "That it is the Lord who giveth power to get wealth."

Others again have objected to the goodness of God, his permission of evil. A good God, say they, would have prevented it; and have placed his creatures in a situation beyond the distresses of life.

With regard to man, there seems to be no great difficulty in this matter. It is enough, surely, that God has put the means of comfort in our power. In the natural world, he hath given us remedies against hunger, cold, and disease; and in the moral world, against the mischief of sin. Even death itself, the last great evil, he hath shewn us how we may change into the most consummate blessing. A state of trial \* therefore, and a future world, seem easily to set things to rights on this head.

The misery of the brute creation is indeed more unaccountable. But have we not the modesty to suppose, that this difficulty may be owing to our ignorance? And that on the strength of what we know of the wisdom of God,

\* See page 42. &c.

we may venture to trust him for those parts which we cannot comprehend?

One truth, after all, is very apparent, that if we should argue ourselves into atheism by the untractableness of these subjects, we should be so far from getting rid of our difficulties, that, if we reason justly, ten thousand greater would arise, either from considering the world under no ruler, or under one of our own imagining.

There remains one farther consideration with regard to the love of God, and that is, the measure of it. We are told we ought to love him "with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength." These are strong expressions, and seem to imply a greater warmth of affection, than many people may perhaps find they can exert. The  
affections

affections of some are naturally cool, and little excited by any objects. The guilty person is he, whose affections are warm in every thing but religion.—The obvious meaning therefore of the expression is, that whether our affections are cool or warm, we should make God our chief good—that we should set our affections more upon him, than upon any thing else—and that, for his sake, and for the sake of his laws, we should be ready to resign every thing we have, and even life itself. So that the words seem nearly of the same import with those of the apostle, “Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.”

L E C.



## LECTURE XI.

Observance of the sabbath—jewish sabbath—difference between it and the christian sabbath—moral ends of the sabbath—public worship—on what reasons it is founded—sabbath a mean of instruction—trust in God—honour due to God's name—objections against the use of oaths answered — perjury — cursing — common swearing.

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OUR next duty to God, is, to worship him, to give him thanks, to put our whole trust in him, and to call upon him.

We have here the duty of prayer recommended to us : but I shall have occasion, in treating of the Lord's prayer, to speak more fully hereafter on this subject. What I shall say at present, shall be confined to the observance of the sabbath.

The jewish sabbath was instituted to commemorate the creation of the world, and the redemption from Egypt. These great events, which it held out, impressed upon the people a strong sense of God's power ; their dependence upon him ; and the propriety of worship.

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The great event held out by the christian sabbath, is the resurrection of Christ. And for this reason the christian hath changed his sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first.

There is another distinction between the jewish and the christian sabbath. The former was observed with that ceremonial strictness which ran through the whole jewish law. The more liberal spirit of the gospel hath freed the christian sabbath from these observances; and retains only its moral ends, public worship, and instruction. By these ends therefore our sabbath is regulated; and nothing profanes it, but what opposes them.—On the head of public worship much might be said.

It is a testimony of that reverence which is due to the supreme being.  
The

The general sense of mankind considers it as such. The heathen nations always approached their gods in public assemblies. The respect of a public resort, on solemn occasions, is paid even to earthly princes.—If it tends therefore in any degree to impress an idea of reverence, it is certainly due on all occasions, where the Almighty is concerned.

An attendance also on the public service of the church is giving a public testimony of our faith. It is that test, which society demands of all its members. By the laws of the community it is exacted; and it tends undoubtedly to create a confidence among men.

These public assemblies are also a kind of connecting bond among christians. Every part of the service points  
out



out that love, and union, which should subsist among them. It places them in the light of children of one common parent; joining, with one consent, in begging blessings, which concern them all.

Public worship also is particularly accommodated to deprecate national calamities, and implore national blessings; as closet devotion is more the vehicle of our private requests. It is commonly also esteemed the most animated species of devotion, as the zeal of one may be supposed to excite the zeal of another.—In the generality indeed of our cold, unanimated assemblies, little of this is seen : but if we were present at an assembly, where every member was really in earnest, we must be much unacquainted with the spirit of devotion,

devotion, if we did not, in some degree, catch the flame.

We must also particularly remember, that great stress is laid upon this species of devotion in scripture; where we read frequently of assemblies meeting to praise God on the first day of the week. —Nor is it perhaps unreasonable to suppose, that public devotion draws God's favour, in a peculiar manner, upon our prayers. “Where two or three are gathered together,” says Christ, “there am I in the midst of them.”

Secondly, the sabbath is the great mean of instruction. If people of education in this enlightened age, think instruction of less consequence to them, yet at least they must think it of great use to the vulgar. It is a common opinion, and the better for being so, that  
were

were it not for the sabbath, religion itself would be lost. And if people of superior stations do not give the observance of it their sanction, it will not long have credit among the vulgar.

Since therefore the observance of the sabbath is founded upon so many wise and just reasons, what have they to answer for, who not only neglect this institution themselves, but bring it by their example into contempt with others? I speak not to those who make it a day of common diversion; who, laying aside all decency, and breaking through all civil and religious regulations, spend it in the most licentious amusements: such people are past all reproof: but I speak to those, who in other things profess themselves to be serious people; and, one might hope, would act right,

right, when they were convinced what was so.

But our prayers, whether in public, or in private, are only an idle parade, unless we put our trust in God.

By putting our trust in God, is meant depending upon him, as our happiness, and our refuge.

Human nature is always endeavouring either to remove pain ; or, if ease be obtained, to acquire happiness. And those things are certainly the most eligible, which in these respects are the most effectual. The world, it is true, makes us flattering promises : but who can say that it will keep them ? We consist of two parts, a body, and a soul. Both of these want the means of happiness, as well as the removal of evil.

But

But the world cannot even afford them to the body. Its means of happiness, to those who depend upon them as such, are, in a thousand instances, unsatisfying. Even, at best, they will fail us in the end. While pain, diseases, and death, shew us, that the world can afford no refuge against bodily distress. And if it cannot afford the means of happiness, and of security, to the body, how much less can we suppose it able to afford them to the soul ?

Nothing then, we see, in this world, is a sufficient foundation for trust : nor indeed can any thing be, but almighty God, who affords us the only means of happiness, and is our only real refuge in distress. On him, the more we trust, the greater we shall feel our security ; and that man who has, on just religious motives, confirmed in himself this trust,

wants



wants nothing else to secure his happiness. The world may wear what aspect it will : it is not on it that he depends. As far as prudence goes, he endeavours to avoid the evils of life : but when they fall to his share (as sooner or later we must all share them) he resigns himself into the hands of that God who made him, and who knows best how to dispose of him. On him he thoroughly depends, and with him he has a constant intercourse by prayer ; trusting, that whatever happens is agreeable to that just government, which God has established ; and that, of consequence, it must be best.

We are enjoined next “ to honour God’s holy name.”

The name of God is accompanied with such ideas of greatness and reverence,

rence; that it should never pass our lips without suggesting those ideas. Indeed it should never be mentioned, but with a kind of awful hesitation, and on the most solemn occasions; either in serious discourse, or, when we invoke God in prayer, or when we swear by his name.

In this last light we are here particularly enjoined to honour the name of God. A solemn oath is an appeal to God himself; \* and is intitled to our utmost respect, were it only in a political light; as in all human concerns it is the strongest test of veracity; and has been approved as such by the wisdom of all nations.

\* *The poets rule in the drama, is exactly what ought to be the Christian's in the use of oaths:*

*Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus  
Inciderit.*

Some

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Some religionists have disapproved the use of oaths, under the idea of prophaneness. The language of the sacred writers conveys a different idea. One of them says, "An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife:" another, "I take God for record upon my soul:" and a third, "God is my witness."

To the use of oaths others have objected, that they are nugatory. The good man will speak the truth without an oath; and the bad man, cannot be held by one. And this would be true, if mankind were divided into good and bad: but as they are generally of a mixed character, we may well suppose, that many would venture a simple falsehood; who would yet be startled at the idea of perjury.\*

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\* *They who attend our courts of justice, often see instances among the common people of their asserting round-*

As an oath therefore taken in a solemn manner, and on a proper occasion, may be considered as one of the highest acts of religion; so perjury, or false swearing, is certainly one of the highest acts of impiety; and the greatest dishonour we can possibly shew to the name of God. It is, in effect, either denying our belief in a God, or his power to punish. Other crimes wish to escape the notice of heaven: this is daring the Almighty to his face.

After perjury, the name of God is most dishonoured by the horrid practice of cursing. Its effects in society it is true, are not so mischievous as those of perjury; nor is it so deliberate an act;

*by what they will either refuse to swear; or when sworn, will not assert.*

but

but yet it conveys a still more horrid idea. Indeed if there be one wicked practice more peculiarly diabolical, than another; it is this: for no employment can be conceived more suitable to infernal spirits, than that of spending their rage and impotence in curses, and execrations. If this shocking vice were not so dreadfully familiar to our ears, it could not fail to strike us with the utmost horror.

We next consider common swearing; a sin so universally practised, that one would imagine some great advantage, in the way either of pleasure or profit, attended it. The wages of iniquity afford some temptation: but to commit sin without any wages, is a strange species of infatuation—May we then ask the common swearer, what the advantages are, which arise from this practice?

It



It will be difficult to point out one. —Perhaps it may be said, that it adds strength to an affirmation. But if a man commonly strengthen his affirmations in this way, we may venture to assert, that the practice will tend rather to lessen, than confirm, his credit. It shews plainly what he himself thinks of his own veracity. We never prop a building, till it becomes ruinous.

Some forward youth may think, that an oath adds an air and spirit to his discourse; that it is manly and important; and gives him consequence. We may whisper one secret in his ear, which he may be assured is a truth—These airs of manliness give him consequence with those only, whose commendation is disgrace: others he only convinces, at how early an age he wishes to be thought profligate.

Perhaps

Perhaps he may imagine, that an oath gives force, and terror to his threatenings.— In this he may be right; and the more horribly wicked he grows, the greater object of terror he may make himself. On this plan, the devil affords him a complete pattern for imitation.

Paltry as these apologies are, I should suppose, the practice of common swearing has little more to say for itself.— Those however, who can argue in favour of this sin, I should fear, there is little chance to reclaim.—But it is probable, that the greater part of such as are addicted to it, act rather from habit, than principle. To deter such persons from indulging so pernicious a habit, and to shew them, that it is worth their while to be at some pains to conquer it,  
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let us now see what arguments may be produced on the other side.

In the first place, common swearing leads to perjury. He who is addicted to swear on every trifling occasion, cannot but often, I had almost said, unavoidably, give the sanction of an oath to an untruth. And though I should hope such perjury is not a sin of so heinous a nature, as what, in judicial matters, is called wilful, and corrupt; yet it is certainly stained with a very great degree of guilt.

But secondly, common swearing is a large stride towards wilful and corrupt perjury; in as much as it makes a solemn oath to be received with less reverence. If nobody dared to take an oath, but on proper occasions, an oath would be received

ceived with respect : but when we are accustomed to hear swearing the common language of our streets, it is no wonder, that people make light of oaths on every occasion ; and that judicial, commercial, qualifying, and official oaths, are all treated with so much indifference.

Thirdly, common swearing may be considered as an act of great irreverence to God ; and as such, implying also a great indifference to religion. If it would disgrace a chief magistrate to suffer appeals on every trifling, or ludicrous occasion ; we may at least think it as disrespectful to the Almighty. — If we lose our reverence for God, it is impossible we can retain it for his laws. You scarce remember a common swearer, who was in other respects an exact christian.

But

But above all, we should be deterred from common swearing by the positive command of our Saviour, which is founded unquestionably upon the wickedness of the practice: "You have heard," saith Christ, "that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself: but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, neither by the earth for it is his footstool: but let your communication" (that is, your ordinary conversation) "be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."—St James also, with great emphasis pressing his master's words, says, "Above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay, lest you fall into condemnation.

I shall



I shall just add, before I conclude this subject, that two things are to be avoided, which are very nearly allied to swearing.

The first is, the use of light exclamations, and invocations upon God, on every trivial occasion. We cannot have much reverence for God himself, when we treat his name in so familiar a manner; and may assure ourselves, that we are indulging a practice, which must weaken impressions, that ought to be preserved as strong as possible.

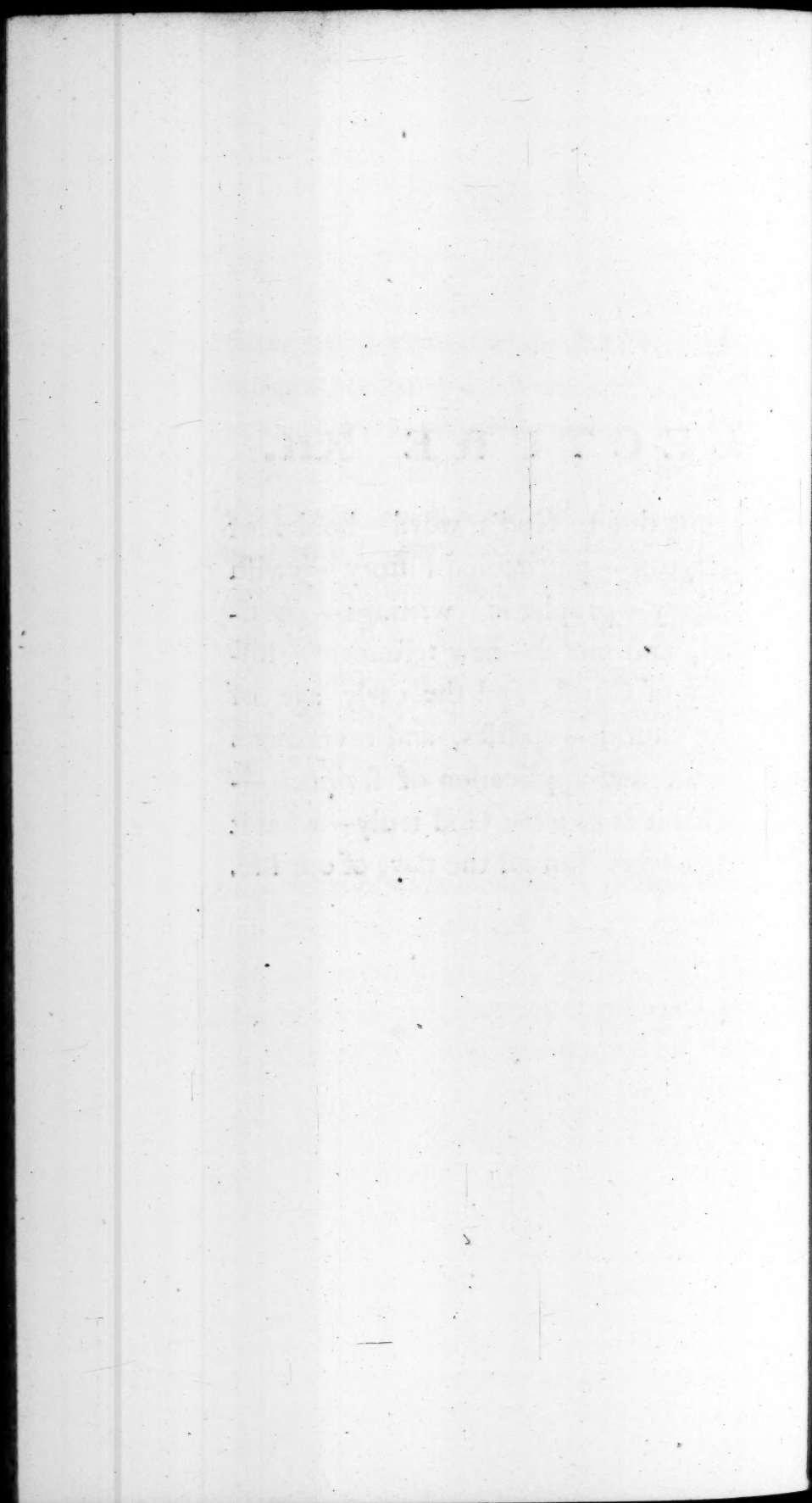
Secondly, such light expressions, and wanton phrases, as sound like swearing are to be avoided; and are often therefore indulged by silly people, for the sake of the sound; who think (if they think at all) that they add to their discourse the spirit of swearing

ing without the guilt of it. Such people had better lay aside, together with swearing, every appearance of it. These appearances may both offend, and mislead others ; and with regard to themselves, may end in realities. At least, they shew an inclination to swearing : and an inclination to vice, indulged, is really vice.

LEC.

## LECTURE XII.

Honour due to God's word—books of scripture—patriarchal history—jewish history—prophetic writings—poetical, and moral—new testament—history of Christ, and the early age of the church—epistles, and revelations—use and application of scripture—what it is to serve God truly—what it is to serve him all the days of our life.



**A**S we are enjoined to honour God's holy name, so are we enjoined also "to honour his holy word."

By God's holy word we mean both the old testament and the new. The connection between them is so close, that no man can pay a regard to the one, without paying it also to the other. The new testament is not only of the same texture with the old ; but the very same web, as it were, only more unfolded.

The books of the old testament open with the earliest accounts of time, earlier than any human records reach ; and yet, in many instances, they are strengthened by human records. The heathen mythology is often grounded upon remnants of the sacred story ; and many of  
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the bible-events are recorded, however imperfectly, in prophane history. The very face of nature bears witness to the deluge.

In the history of the patriarchs is exhibited a most beautiful picture of the simplicity of ancient manners; and of genuine nature, unadorned indeed by science, but impressed strongly with a sense of religion. This gives an air of greatness and dignity, to all the sentiments and actions of these exalted characters.

The patriarchal history is followed by the jewish. Here we have the principal events of that peculiar nation; which lived under a theocracy, and was set apart to preserve, and propagate \* the

\* See the subject very learnedly treated in one of the first chapters of Jenkins's reasonableness of Christianity.  
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knowledge of the true God through those ages of ignorance, antecedent to Christ. Here too we find those types, and representations, which the apostle to the Hebrews calls the shadows of good things to come.

To those books, which contain the legislation, and history of the Jews, succeed the prophetic writings. As the time of the promise drew still nearer, the notices of its approach became stronger. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was but obscurely, shadowed by the ceremonies of the Jewish law, was marked in stronger lines by the prophets, and proclaimed in more intelligible language. The office of the Messiah, his ministry, his life, his actions, his death, and his resurrection, are all very distinctly held out. It is true, the Jews, explaining

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the warm figures of the prophetic language too literally, and applying to a temporal dominion those expressions, which were intended only as descriptive of a spiritual, were offended at the meanness of Christ's appearance on earth; and would not own him for that Messiah, whom their prophets had foretold; though these very prophets, when they used a less figurative language, had described him, as he really was, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

To these books are added several others, poetical and moral, which administer much instruction, and matter of meditation to devout minds.

The new testament contains first the simple history of Christ, as recorded in the four gospels. In this history also are delivered those excellent instructions, which

which our Saviour occasionally gave his disciples; the precepts and the example blended together.

To the gospels succeeds an account of the lives and actions of some of the principal apostles; together with the early state of the christian church,

The epistles of several of the Apostles, particularly of St. Paul, to some of the new established churches, make another part. Our saviour had promised to endow his disciples with power from on high to complete the great work of publishing the gospel: and in the epistles that work is completed. The truths and doctrines of the christian religion are here still more unfolded, and enforced: as the great scheme of our redemption, was now finished by the death of Christ.

The sacred volume is concluded with the revelations of St. John; which are supposed to contain a prophetic description of the future state of the church. Some of these prophecies, it is thought on very good grounds, are already fulfilled; and others, which now, as sublime descriptions only, amuse the imagination, will probably, in the future ages of the church, be the objects of the understanding also.

Such is the word of God, which we are enjoined to honour. And this honour, we may be assured, is best shewn by applying these holy writings to the uses for which God intended them. We should take the bible into our hands, as we should approach a divine instructor, with a habit of mind—not to cavil—not to create objections—not to quote wantonly—not to apply to ludicrous



crous purposes (all which is certainly dishonouring it) but with a pious inclination to improve our hearts, by learning from it the duties of christianity—by learning from it, how to live, and how to die.

This divine book furnishes a great variety of matter for our meditation. It is profitable, we are told, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction. When we find in it moral rules laid down for our conduct, we should compare our actions with those rules: and where motives are assigned, we should try our hearts by these too, and examine, whether they are right in the sight of God. When it instructs us to have our conversation in heaven, and to set our affections on things above, we ought to examine ourselves, whether heaven, or the world is more the object  
of

of our desires. When the mercies of the gospel are recited, they should raise our joy, our love, and thankfulness: and when we read the denunciations of God's wrath against sin, our minds should receive with reverence the awful impression. When the good actions of holy men are recorded, we should consider them as recorded for our example; and when their frailties are recited, these should teach us diffidence, and humility. In short, our fears, our hopes, our faith, our joy, our love, and gratitude have all sufficient objects to engage them. It should be our great endeavour to transfuse the spirit of this holy book into our lives; and he who can do this the best, may be assured, that he honours it the most.

The last part of our duty to God is,

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“ to serve him truly all the days of our life.”

“ To serve God truly all the days of our life” implies two things: first, the mode of this service; and secondly, the term of it.

First, we must serve God truly. We must not rest satisfied with the outward action: but must take care that every action be founded on a proper motive. It is the motive alone that makes an action acceptable to God. The hypocrite “ may fast twice in the week, and give alms of all that he possesses:” nay he may fast the whole week, if he be able; and give all he has in alms; but if his fasts, and his alms are intended as matter of ostentation only, neither the one, nor the other, is that true service which God requires. God  
requires

requires the heart : He requires that an earnest desire of acting agreeably to his will, should be the general spring of our actions : and this will give even an indifferent action a value in his sight.

As we are enjoined to serve God truly, so are we enjoined to serve him "all the days of our life." As far as human frailties will permit, we should persevere in a constant tenor of obedience. That lax behaviour, which instead of making a steady progress, is continually relapsing into former errors, and running the same round of sinning, and repenting, is rather the life of an irresolute sinner, than of a pious christian. Human errors, and frailties, we know, God will not treat with too severe an eye : but he who, in the general tenor of his life, does not keep advancing towards christian perfection ; but suffers himself,

himself, at intervals, entirely to lose sight of his calling, cannot be really serious in his profession : he is at a great distance from serving God truly all the days of his life ; and has no scriptural ground to hope much from the mercy of God.

That man, whether placed in high estate, or low, has reached the summit of human happiness, who is truly serious in the service of his great master. The things of this world may engage, but cannot engross, his attention : its sorrows, and its joys may affect, but cannot disconcert, him. No man, he knows, can faithfully serve two masters. He hath hired himself to one—that great master, whose commands he reveres, whose favour he seeks, whose displeasure alone is the real object of his fears ; and whose rewards alone are the  
real

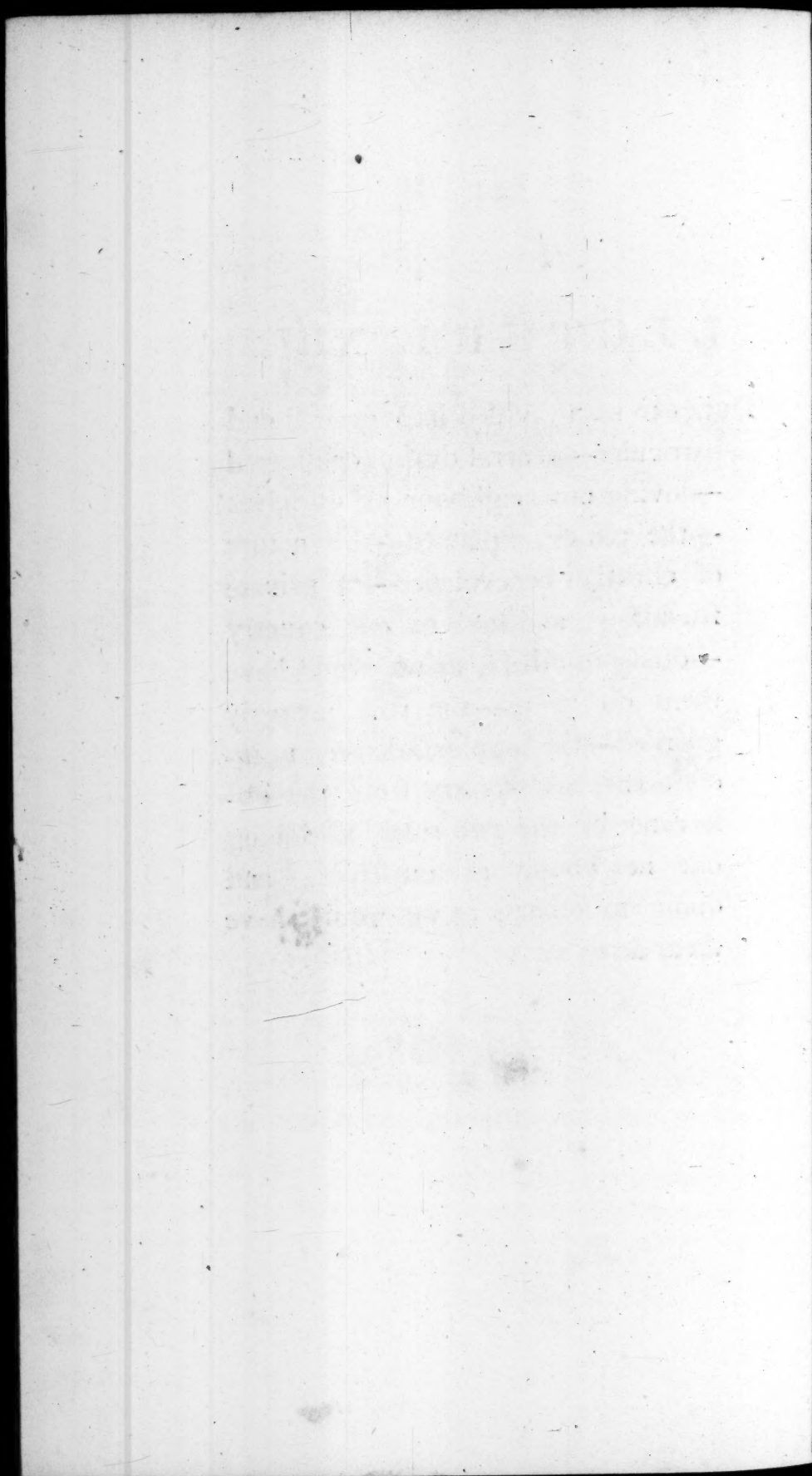


real objects of his hope. Every thing else is, trivial in his sight. The world may sooth ; or it may threaten him : he perseveres steadily in the service of his God ; and in that perseverance feels his happiness every day the more established.

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## LECTURE XIII.

Duties to man divided into general and particular—general duties considered—loving our neighbour as ourselves—the phrase explained—the nature of christian benevolence—of private friendship, and love to our country—doing to others, as we would have them do to us—the rule properly guarded—the happiness derived to individuals, and society from the observance of the two rules, of loving our neighbour as ourselves; and doing to others, as we would have them do to us.



**H**AVING considered those duties, which we owe immediately to God, we next consider those, which have a more immediate connection with man. These, as disposed in the summary before us, may be divided into general, and particular duties—such as concern to mankind in general; and such as arise from particular relations.

Let us consider, first, such as are general. “We must love our neighbour as ourselves”—and, “Do to others, as we would have them do to us.” These two rules may not improperly be called an appendix to the law. Upon every emergence a law in point may not be ready: it may not indeed exist. In many cases we must be more at liberty. What law, for instance, can direct all  
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those little nameless offices of friendly intercourse between man and man, which preserve the peace of society; and form the greatest part of its happiness? What law again can direct our gratitude? or can enter into all those minute distinctions, which make the circumstances of one man different from those of another? We are here therefore enjoined to make appeals to our own feelings in many cases not taken notice of by law.—The former of these great rules regards our affections; the latter, our actions.

First, “we must love our neighbour as ourselves.” The meaning of the word neighbour, our Saviour settled in the parable of the good Samaritan; from which it appears, that all mankind are to be esteemed our neighbours.

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The mode also of this affection is defined. "We must love our neighbour, as ourselves." How then do we love ourselves? Self-love, we know, is a steady principle, prompting us, at all times, to avoid pain, and pursue happiness. For though men are often the voluntary authors of their own misery; yet they act under a blind belief, that the present pleasure, in a vicious action, may overbalance the pernicious consequences. Their own happiness is always intended.—If therefore the love we owe our neighbour, must be measured by the love we bear ourselves, it must be a steady principle prompting us at all times to relieve his distresses, and promote his happiness.

But it may be objected, that love is involuntary—that we like, and dislike from humour, prejudice, and caprice:  
how

how then is an affection, so little in our power, prescribed as a duty?

This is easily answered. A general, abstracted benevolence, which is ready to do good to all, and which delights in the good of all, may exist without any of that particular attachment to the individual, which is usually called love: and this is the temper, which christianity would encourage—an affection to the whole species; and particularly a compassion to the distressed part of it. The good Samaritan would have relieved any man in the same circumstances, in which he found the distressed traveller. To that man he had no particular attachment. He had never before seen him.

Here a question may arise about private friendship, and love to our country;

try ; on both which points the scripture is silent.

It may be so : it was our Saviour's design to enlarge our affections, rather than contract them. He, who was so well acquainted with human nature, certainly knew, that if universal benevolence were attained, all the inferior degrees of affection to relations, friends, and country, would follow of course.

Besides, religion seems to have no more business to recommend friendship, or patriotism, than it has to recommend marriage, or celibacy ; a country life, or a town-life. They are modes of affection, which circumstances may make suitable to one man, and unsuitable to another ; and therefore cannot be of general moral obligation. One may conceive a man to change his abode so frequently,

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quently, and so remotely, as to have neither country, nor friend.

The regulation of our affections leads naturally to the regulation of our actions. "We must do to others, as we would have them do to us."

Are we then to be the dupes of any extravagant claim, that may be made upon us?

By no means. This is a perversion of the rule. We are required only to do to others, what we could reasonably expect they should do to us. Hence all unreasonable claims are excluded. With this restriction the rule before us is truly admirable; and should be ever in our minds, when we have intercourse with others. Scarce any case can occur, in which it will not direct us right.

Our

Our practice is not here confounded by nice distinctions, or subtil points of morality: we are referred at once to our own breasts. Our own feelings are the criterion. We have only to ask ourselves, whether the action in dispute be such, as we should think might reasonably be done to ourselves? An answer to this question will solve the most difficult case between us, and our neighbour. And indeed if we attend sufficiently to this rule, we shall scarce need any other.

From the exertion of universal benevolence, inculcated in these two rules; every happiness must arise, of which men are capable, either as individuals, or as members of society. The first, which regulates our affections, leads directly to our own happiness. If we love others, as we love ourselves, we must of

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course



course divest our minds of all those vile affections, which are the great sources of our misery : and when envy, malice, revenge, and other bad inclinations are rooted out, the kind and friendly affections will of course take place : at least, the ground is well prepared for their reception.

As the observance of the first rule leads directly to our own happiness ; the observance of the second leads directly to the happiness of others. The mischiefs, which distress society, arise chiefly from violence and fraud. Both these will be driven out, through the prevalence of this principle ; for who would himself wish to be the object of either ?

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The signs which accompany this divine temper, are a general obliging behaviour in our ordinary conversation; and a gentleness of manners to all men, whether they are superiors, equals, or inferiors: a generous candour towards their faults; and a readiness to bear with their little infirmities, prejudices, and humours. All this will be the natural overflowing of a benevolent heart. And though we do not say, that whoever possesses an obliging civility of manners, must, of course, also have a benevolent heart; (for an obliging behaviour is sometimes natural, and sometimes assumed) yet it may not be improper for those, who wish to attain this great principle, to begin with a gentleness of behaviour; as an excellent mean to soften the heart, and render it susceptible of benign impressions. Such a behaviour may, perhaps,

haps, be more assistant to us, in attaining the principle itself, than at first appears.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

